

THE LITURGICAL MOVEMENT  
AND THE LOCAL CHURCH

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The  
Liturgical Movement  
and the  
Local Church

ALFRED R. <sup>RIVER</sup>SHANDS, 1928-

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ALLENSON  
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FOR

*Ernest W. Southcott*

What the soul is to the body Christians are to the world. The soul is distributed in every member of the body and Christians are scattered in every city in the world. The soul dwells in the body and yet is not of the body. So Christians live in the world but are not of the world.

EPISTLE TO DIOGNETUS

I look upon all the world as my parish.

JOHN WESLEY

## Foreword

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I THINK my interest in the Liturgical Movement first began when I read Abbé Michonneau's *Revolution in a City Parish*. This book seemed to me to cut through so many of the non-essentials of life in the church to the real heart of the matter—the church's mission to society. There was the ring of wide experience, authority, and commitment in those pages for me. Here in an industrial parish of Paris, a group of clergy had banded together for the sole purpose of spreading the gospel to every corner of the neighbourhood. Their strength lay in the fact that they were a community waiting on God, and there was no problem in the parish which was too difficult for them to tackle in this strength. It seemed to me that these men had had the courage to lay aside some of the deadening conventions of parish life; and risking misunderstanding and failure, they had launched out to meet the most pressing problems of the local church. There was about this experiment the joyousness and the confidence of New Testament Christianity. There was a radiance which was unmistakable.

Later I discovered that there were other churches—some in England and some in France—which were having experiences not unlike that of the team in Paris. There were many facets—a new enthusiasm for the Bible and for the Christian fellowship, a mounting desire for reunion among Christians, and above all a rediscovery of the Eucharist as the 'source of revolution' for the revolutionary parish. Before me lay a whole jigsaw of pieces of experience which though dissimilar, fitted together to form one whole. Like so many others I realized that a new approach to the church was being born—something with a freshness and vigour that marked it as a work of the Spirit.



Most of us today have heard something of these significant shifts in thinking and practice which are taking place in the local church. The House Church, Team Work, and the Vigil of Easter are terms we hear used. Where are these things happening and what is behind them? What does this mean for the average local church? This is the type of question which many clergy and interested laymen are asking today. This small book is an attempt to give a brief but well-rounded picture of these developments which can be summed up under the general heading of the Liturgical Movement. There have been so many sides to this revival that one could not begin to cover them all adequately within this scope. We have had to be selective at many points. And, as the title indicates, the selection has been based on the needs of the local church. This has been the principal concern: what should the local church as it exists today know about the Liturgical Movement? The book is written by an Anglican—a priest of the Episcopal Church in America—and betrays in parts some peculiarly Anglican concerns. But that is inevitable when you are thinking in terms of the only local church you know—your own. Yet in spite of occasional limitations in the point of view, this is intended for Christians of all communions. And that is perhaps the most wonderful thing about the Liturgical Movement—its relevance for Christians of widely scattered traditions.

Even such a brief work as this owes a great deal to others. I want to thank especially those who made it possible: Professor E. C. Ratcliff and the Principal and students of Westcott House in Cambridge; the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York whom I represented; and particularly the Rev. Eric James, the Rev. David Paton, the Rev. Robert Hughes and the Rev. Gordon Wakefield who read the manuscript and whose criticisms are incorporated into it.

ALFRED R. SHANDS

# 1 *Defining the Problem*

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## *Awakenings*

THE LOCAL CHURCH has been rediscovered! In many corners of the world—France, England, Scotland, America—and in many communions—Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Reformed—there is an awakened interest in the small community of Christians gathered together and representing Christ to the world.

The awakening has not been on a large scale. In fact to the casual observer it has hardly been noticeable. Yet, where the revival has touched, its effects have been decisive and profound. There has been a compelling quality about it which has attracted notice far beyond its size. Gradually the Church has become aware of this handful of scattered communities, and has responded to the authentic ring of New Testament Christianity revived in the twentieth century.

The birth of these communities has been prophetic, for they seem clearly to point the way towards the local neighbourhood church of the future. In the Church of England there is St. Wilfrid's, Halton, made known to us in the vicar's book, *The Parish Comes Alive*. In this parish of 'council houses' and older suburbs outside the industrial city of Leeds, the laity have begun to accept their missionary role. The great reality which has emerged is the 'House Church' with its discussions, Bible study, celebrations of the Holy Communion, and evensong in the homes of the parish. Also in the Church of England is the Parish of Greenhill, Harrow, described by Joost De Blank in *The Parish in Action*. Here we have a parish of working people in a suburb of London who made the presence of the Church felt in the neighbourhood. The parish



was divided into sectors with laymen who were responsible for the individuals in their street.

In France one finds a wealth of examples in the many parishes run by the *Mission de France* with their small teams of priests. These men are accepting responsibility for the most pagan areas of both city and country with the intention of raising up a militant laity. But outside the *Mission* the parish of *St. Séverin* in Paris, a missionary parish for the students of the Sorbonne, is well known through its publications. Here particularly, community life as well as apostleship has been realized through lay participation in the liturgy. Also in Paris, yet in a very different environment, are the two parishes which have known the leadership of Abbé Michonneau—*Sacré Coeur* and *Sts. Pierre et Paul* in Colombes, an industrial area. We have learned how these parishes were reborn in *Revolution in a City Parish* and *The Missionary Spirit in Parish Life*. The barriers of indifference, ignorance, and hostility in the neighbourhood were gradually overcome by the missionary zeal of a team of priests.

In the French Protestant Church there is the Community of Taizé in rural Burgundy, a religious community of men from Calvinist and Lutheran backgrounds who have revived the life of the village and neighbourhood through their prayer and work. Members contribute to the local life through the practice of medicine, farming, and the arts and crafts. The relationship of liturgy to life is being excitingly rediscovered. Though this is a religious community, it is the parish church which is the great centre of their community life.

In Scotland there is the Parish of North Kelvinside described by its minister, Tom Allan, in *The Face of My Parish*. This working-class parish in a Glasgow suburb experienced a parish mission which proved to be a turning point for the people. Like the other parishes we have mentioned, it learned how to reach out and be present in the surrounding neighbourhood. Also in the Church of Scotland there is the well-known Iona Community, which exists not only on the island of Iona, the centre of its life, but also in the parishes where

its members minister. In these parishes the idea of the 'House Church' has been developed in terms of neighbourhood meetings for discussion and prayer.

America offers two diverse examples of this new life in the local church. There is the Roman Catholic Parish of Holy Cross in a suburban section of St. Louis, which has become known through articles in the liturgical magazine *Worship*. An imaginative use of worship with much more participation of the people has led this parish to a reawakening. The other example is the Inner City Protestant Parish in New York, Chicago, and Cleveland. Again it is the acceptance of the immediate neighbourhood by the Church which has proved to be the Church's means of revitalization.

What these experimental parishes have shown the Church is a new depth of parish life. This new depth is the breakthrough of the Church into the authentic Christian community. Here have been found Christians—and only a few in any place—who have had the courage to be who they were meant to be, the people of God. And because these people have realized the infinite importance of fulfilling this role they have found new ways of expressing their life together. So the Liturgical Movement, of which we shall speak presently, was born.

These groups are showing the way to a renewed understanding of the role of the local church. Yet there is no need for the local church completely to discard its present way of life, thinking that the final answer has been found. This is not necessary because the renewal has only just begun. It is something which is developing and evolving almost on a month-to-month basis. What is needed is for Christians soberly to consider the revolution which is taking place and try to discover their own creative expressions of this revival. In a sense this is the task which we have set for ourselves here. We must stand back and see the general pattern which emerges in the midst of all the exciting experiments which are taking place; and then we must try to work out a creative expression of this revival for the congregation.

In trying to do this, the one thing which will stand out more than anything else is the experience of others. In a sense this entire essay will contain little which is original. Anyone who is acquainted with the literature of this field will find many familiar ideas expressed. The majority of the experiments suggested have been tried by some Christian group somewhere. We only hope that we have given sufficient credit where it is due. Any creativeness in this essay comes in trying to fit the many pieces of experience together into one comprehensive pattern. The Church must begin to see the total resources which are now available to us through the pioneering of others.

### *What is the Liturgical Movement?*

Within the Church today there is a growing desire for catholicity. The evidence of this desire, spread broadly throughout the whole Church, is seen in the rise of the Ecumenical Movement and the increasing importance of Biblical Theology. Both of these developments are catholic in nature because they spring from a desire for the wholeness and unity of the one Church of Christ. The first expresses a penitence over the splintering of the Church since the Reformation, and the second reflects the need of the Church today to find the common roots of our origin over and above the historic formulations of the Reformation and Counter Reformation.

The third piece of evidence for the Church's growing catholicity is the Liturgical Movement. We must see it within this framework or otherwise we will miss its real concern and mission. The Liturgical Movement is part of the concert of witness to the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church today. Like the experience of Pentecost it is drawing together people of many nations and tongues. Churches of divergent backgrounds are discovering a new-found agreement. What Dean Pike said of the Episcopal Church is true also of the Liturgical Movement—'more catholic than the Catholics, more protestant than the Protestants, and more liberal than the Liberals.' It is because it is emphasizing clearly the inner



essentials of life in Christ that the movement is so completely catholic and evangelical at the same time.

The witness which this movement makes is to the fundamentally corporate nature of the Church's worship. Nearly everywhere one looks today one finds a renewed emphasis on the group, the cell, the community, the fellowship. The whole gamut of social relations within the Church is being rediscovered. The concern of the Liturgical Movement is with these rediscoveries. Strictly speaking, they all belong ultimately to the Liturgical Movement because they are all part of our recovery of the Body of Christ. As we will explain in some detail later, the Body of Christ is above all liturgical. All group movements within the Church must inevitably seek their fulfilment in the Liturgical Movement because all life in the Church points towards the worship of the Father by the Son through the Spirit. G. W. O. Addleshaw writes in *The High Church Tradition*<sup>1</sup>:

For some years now there has been a movement in the Church of Rome, usually known as the Liturgical Movement, which is trying to find reintegration and wholeness in the liturgy. The movement is not primarily concerned with the origin or history of the various Christian liturgies; nor as it is sometimes supposed in the Church of England, is it a matter of bright services, audible reading of lessons and prayers, parish communions. By penetrating beneath the outward trappings to the essence of the liturgy, it tries to make us comprehend its inner meaning and implications. It seeks to give liturgical worship a rightful place in the life of the soul. Each Christian is to take his share in the liturgy as the prayer of the Church in the totality of its life. In the thought of the movement the liturgy is not an act of the clergy or the choir or a pious few, but one in which the whole body of the faithful share, one in which they can find reintegration, wholeness, life, and joy.

Nowadays it proves necessary to underline the fact that the

<sup>1</sup> p. 18.

Liturgical Movement is concerned with basic and fundamental matters. Perhaps this betrays the fact that the whole idea of worship is far from being adequately understood today. One of the most common misunderstandings is that the movement is trying merely to increase the ceremonial of the Church and is thus a 'High Church' movement in the deprecatory sense of the term. Actually this is just what the Liturgical Movement is criticizing. It says that the Church must start being truly communicative about the manner in which it worships. But not only is the Liturgical Movement a judgment on what is usually meant by 'High Church'; it is as well recalling to us many of the concerns of the Reformation. It is reinvigorating the Church with an enthusiasm for the message of the Bible to the people of God. It emphasizes anew the importance of the worshipping fellowship. And in the 'Catholic' world it is pressing for a return to the simple table altar with the celebrant facing the people.

The first emphasis of the Liturgical Movement is the 're-integration and wholeness' of which Addleshaw speaks. Perhaps the atomization of modern life has affected the worship of the Church more disastrously than anything else. For worship to have any value at all there must be some sort of unity between the gift and the giver or else the action is without meaning. Unless worship is vitally connected with life in the world, it becomes lip service and hypocrisy. Worship is in itself a symbol of the unity of the religious view of life, and when this unity is broken and the offering of the world back to God no longer takes place, the whole symbol is undermined. Thus the Liturgical Movement is acutely aware of the need to re-establish a society in which men are capable of accepting their responsibility for all of life. As long as life appears to men to be split into a series of compartments—home, work, leisure, church—and the interdependence of these areas is lost, true worship becomes an impossibility. The Church has to realize the common meaning which binds all these areas together and accept its responsibility for this meaning for worship to take place.

In the thought of the Liturgical Movement wholeness and holiness are very closely allied. Holiness from one standpoint is the wholeness of the full Life of God bound to the full life of man. Though holiness in the sense of the 'otherness' of God must be expressed in the liturgy, the movement suggests that the holiness of wholeness is a primary concern today. The first step must be to emphasize the unity of all life, a unity which gains its strength from the way in which God has unified all life through the Incarnation.

Secondly, the Liturgical Movement feels it is necessary for each Christian to 'take his share in the liturgy as the prayer of the Church in the totality of its life.' Participation in the worship of the Church is seen to be absolutely essential to the full Christian life. And here we find an implied criticism of the liturgical passivity which one finds in the average congregation. This seems to be one of the main characteristics of worship today in both the Roman Catholic and the Protestant Churches. Worship appears to have been put entirely in the hands of the priest or minister as 'his business'. This passivity of the laity is one of the principal gaps which separates us from the mind of the early Church.

Participation is judged to be so important because Christian worship is a life of organic union in the Body of Christ. There can be no perfect sort of life in any organic body unless all the members are functioning properly. This participation is then not individual, but rather with and in relation to all the other members of the Body. As the Liturgical Movement looks at this norm of Christian worship, it sees that the present condition of the Church's life prevents its participation in its own true organic nature at any level. Actually before true worship can begin, we must learn what it means to be the Church. This should make clear the broad terms in which the movement understands the worship of God. In no sense can liturgy be limited to the formal liturgical services of the Church. It demands life in the world in order to be expressed.

Thirdly, the Liturgical Movement sees that the Christian doctrine of the priesthood of Christ is the key both to the re-



integration and wholeness of life and to participation in the Body of Christ. This priesthood is the offering of Christ to the Father which is carried on to the end of time in His Body. It is the offering of ourselves, our souls and bodies through the eternal offering of Christ on behalf of the world. The priesthood is this *action* of Christ, which becomes our action through Him. This emphasis on the priestly function of the Body is something which is seen as coming out of the Gospels, looking back of course to the entire Old Testament, and interpreted by St. Paul in the Epistles. The movement feels that the Hebraic roots of Christianity must be recovered.

### *What is Liturgy?*

To too many Christians today the word 'liturgy' has rather negative connotations. Perhaps this word may signify to some the use of a set form of service which is more formal than what they are used to. Yet this is far from the root meaning of the word. Actually the word 'liturgy' is one of the most expressive and basic words of the Christian vocabulary. (Perhaps there should be a campaign in local congregations to popularize its use!) The more general word 'worship' is not nearly so descriptive. This word can apply equally well to any religion, but 'liturgy' is grounded in the experience and faith of worshipping through the Lord Jesus Christ. Far from emphasizing the external formality of worship, 'liturgy' expresses the fact that Christian worship is a present *experience*—the action of Christ in the midst of His people and the action of Christians in response.

The history of this word gives the clue to what it means. In classical Greece it was a secular word which meant a public work done by a citizen for the benefit of the state. If a citizen had a ship built at his own expense and presented it to the state, he was said to have done a 'liturgy'. By doing this he became a 'liturgist'. The word came to be used in a religious sense in the Greek Septuagint version of the Old Testament, referring to the administration of sacrifice in the Temple. It

comes into the New Testament notably in *Hebrews* (8.6) in which Christ's ministry from God is contrasted with Moses'. Christ in the mind of the writer is a 'liturgist' in the performance of His ministry.

In *Romans* (15.16) St. Paul applies the word to himself, 'because of the grace given me by God to be a "liturgist" of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles.' In *Philippians* (2.25) St. Paul applies the word to his helper Epaphroditus in the most pragmatic sense, 'I have thought it necessary to send you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and "liturgist" to my need.'

The basic idea in liturgy is action, and a very practical action at that. Further, it is an action for the sake of others or another. This key thought behind liturgy was, it seems, precisely the notion which the early Church held about worship. The characteristic word they used was, of course, 'eucharist' or 'thanksgiving'—the action of *giving* thanks. Obedience to the commandment, 'Do this in remembrance of me,' meant for the early Church both an interior and an exterior action of taking, blessing, breaking and distributing the Bread which was Christ. The interior action was the self-offering of each member through the action of Christ.

Liturgy is the most expressive word of the worship of Christians because it is centred in the union between Christ and ourselves—the Body. It expresses the fact that we can give no acceptable worship to God apart from Christ. We are able to worship only inasmuch as He is worshipping the Father in us. In spite of our own personal inadequacy to worship the Father, we must of course offer our own worship, yet it is Christ who makes it adequate. Secondly, liturgy expresses the fact that Christian worship is communal worship with other members of the Body. There is a sense in which worship of the Father through the Son is incomplete unless *all* the members of the Body are participating: in the early Church, the Sacrament was taken to all those who for some reason were unable to be present at the Eucharist. Though there is much scope for individual prayer, there is no room for in-

dividualism in this norm of Christian worship. It stresses the organic union of all the members too clearly.

All life in Christ is merely working out in the world what is inherent in the liturgy. The adjective 'liturgical' is one of the most expressive words of Christian living. We are 'liturgical' when we love the brethren because in this we are presenting ourselves to God. 'Your brother is the altar on which you lay your sacrifice.' The Christian life from this point of view could be called the extension of the offertory.

We feel that these wonderful words, 'liturgy' and 'liturgical' must be recovered by the church, they are so essential to the heart of the Christian faith. They are words which speak to the condition of the church today in our need both for sacrifice and for community.

### *What is the history of the Liturgical Movement?*

We have been speaking as though the Liturgical Movement were an organized body with a central committee and policy. Nothing could be further from the truth. Within the Anglican Communion at least the Liturgical Movement has been at some pains *not* to be an organization. The statements drawn up by the groups representing the Liturgical Movement in the Church of England and the Episcopal Church in the United States are significant. In England the *Parish and People* group calls itself 'an association of members of the Anglican Communion for the study and dissemination of the principles underlying the Church's corporate worship (i.e., liturgy) and for the application of these principles in the life of the parish and the world (liturgical action).'<sup>2</sup> The statement of the American group, which is known as *The Associated Parishes*, appears in all their pastoral publications. We quote a part of it.

The Holy Spirit is at work today in that movement known as the *Liturgical Revival*. Our Church with its rich inheri-

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in a sheet published by *Parish and People*, entitled *Parish and People: What Is It?*



tance of 'common prayer', has a rare opportunity to set forward this movement by applying its basic principles. Christian life is a corporate experience of worship and work. Each Parish must be a center of these two inter-related activities. Church life consists primarily of bringing people to worship God and exercising people in Christian work. The chief concern of our Association is to seek and find the means of bringing these two basic tasks to effective expression in our parish life.

Both these statements show how loosely the Liturgical Movement sits to any programme, and for that reason it is indeed a movement, a movement of the Holy Spirit. But before we can understand the operation of the movement, we must examine very briefly the most decisive events which led to the existence of the revival in the Church today. There have in fact been two Liturgical Movements, each quite different from the other, and the second learning from the mistakes of the first.

The first Liturgical Movement was a product of the Romantic Revival of the 19th century. It must be understood against the background of interest in both medieval and classical civilization which that century produced. We must see it as a part of the medievalism that produced Sir Walter Scott's novels and the revival of Gothic architecture. The 19th century was above all a century which developed a love of history, and the Church proved to be a fertile ground for the historical interests of the age. This was the age which rediscovered the Latin and Greek fathers as well as the medieval Church. Though this historical concern had an enormous effect on the life of the Church in terms of deepening and enriching it, there was one factor which tended to spoil all the rest. The concern was much more romantic than based on the needs of men.

This first Liturgical Movement began in France with the life and work of Dom Guéranger (1805-1875). A Benedictine monk, he began to reform the spiritual apathy of the Church in France and restore the ancient (Roman) liturgical traditions. He went about it by re-establishing the Abbey of Solesmes on

the basis of a medieval religious community. In 1841 came the first volume of his massive work, *L'Année Liturgique*. Though this was a noble enterprise and Guéranger succeeded in restoring the plainsong chant, the beginnings of the Liturgical Movement suffered from the fact that Guéranger was an ultramontanist and his work lacked proper scientific grounding. We must beware, however, of the current tendency to play down Guéranger's contribution. Regardless of what we think of him, he and other 19th century liturgical romanticists laid a necessary foundation.

This first movement was characterized by its historicism, its churchiness, its romanticism, its lack of touch with society, and its passionate desire to revive the fullness of the Christian tradition. Though the movement never became popular in the Roman Church, the parallel development in the Church of England had, of course, a number of consequences. The Anglican religion of the Victorian era was highly coloured by the secondary features of the Oxford Movement. The Ritualists who followed the Oxford Movement left us our inheritance of choir screens, vested choirs, high altars, florid Anglican chant, and 'holy brass'.

Louis Bouyer believes that we can date the second Liturgical Movement from a speech which the great Dom Lambert Beauduin made in Malines in 1909 in which he proposed what was to become the basis of the Belgian liturgical revival. The proposals stated that the liturgy is not something which we are meant to see and hear alone, but rather something in which we all take part, bringing to God 'the whole individual man in the whole Christian community.' This was certainly a radical enough departure for the times, but fortunately it happened to coincide with the desire of Pope Pius X to strengthen the parish life of the Roman Church by encouraging frequent communions as well as advocating the ancient tradition of plainsong sung by the people.

While the movement was developing in Belgium under the leadership of Beauduin, equally important things were happening in Germany at the Abbey of Maria Laach. In 1918 the

abbot, Ildefons Herwegen, began the publication of a series entitled *Ecclesia Orans*. It was within this framework that the prophetic teaching of the Abbey was begun. The towering theological figure was Dom Odo Casel. The importance of this great man cannot yet be assessed because he continues to have a profound influence on liturgical theology as the recent book by Louis Bouyer, *Life and Liturgy*, testifies. Casel, who had written his doctorate thesis on a phase of the Greek mystery religions, turned to the Fathers and sought to develop the role of the mystery in the liturgy of the early Church. Casel's doctrine of the Christian mystery is certainly one of the most important re-discoveries which have been made in the entire Liturgical Movement.

Many of the ideas of Casel were taken into Austria by the late Pius Parsch and popularized by him in terms of the parish situation. Parsch, an Augustinian monk of Klosterneuburg, took over the tiny church of St. Gertrud in 1919 and turned it into an experimental parish. It was here in his Bible Hours with laymen that the relevance of the Bible to liturgy began to become clear to him.

The Liturgical Movement was first known in the United States about 1929 when Dom Virgil Michel came to St. John's Abbey, a Benedictine community in Minnesota, and founded what is today the leading liturgical magazine in the English language, *Orate Fratres*, now called *Worship*.<sup>3</sup> In England, the role of innovator must certainly go to Fr. Gabriel Hebert of Kelham. In 1935 his *Liturgy and Society* brought to the attention of the Church of England much of what was going on on the continent, as well as giving the beginnings of an Anglican expression of the Liturgical Movement.

Even though the war had just begun, the Liturgical Movement made some of its most important advances in the early 1940's. A group within the Roman Catholic Church in America began in 1940 a series of yearly liturgical conferences called The National Liturgical Week. These conferences which

<sup>3</sup> *Worship*, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota. Rev. Godfrey Dickmann, editor.



have continued every year since then have brought together the thought and leadership of the movement and have crystallized the matter in the American Roman Catholic Church. In 1942 the movement in the Roman Catholic Church in France had reached the point at which a liturgical centre with a small staff could be established. The *Centre de Pastorale Liturgique*<sup>4</sup> was set up to organize liturgical conferences, promote the scholarly side of the movement, and be a resource to parishes. This centre edits the principal French liturgical magazine, *La Maison-Dieu*.<sup>5</sup> The Liturgical Movement in France received a tremendous boost in the establishment of the *Mission de France* in 1941 under the patronage of Cardinal Suhard, when a number of parishes began to try out in practice the insights of the new liturgical scholarship.

Within the Anglican Communion the movement was not crystallized in any outward expression until the formation of the *Associated Parishes*<sup>6</sup> in the Episcopal Church in the United States in 1946. In 1950 a number of priests and laymen in the Church of England formed what is known as *Parish and People*.<sup>7</sup> This formation grew out of previous developments such as the Cell Movement, the Parish Meeting, the Parish Communion, etc.

Shortly after the French liturgical centre was established, a similar centre was organized in Germany to spearhead a deeper appreciation of liturgy in the Roman Catholic Church in Germany. The *Liturgisches Institut*<sup>8</sup> in Trier is attempting to be a resource to parishes in expressing the relation of liturgy to human life. The headquarters of the Austrian Liturgical Movement, the *Volksliturgisches Apostolat*<sup>9</sup> is located at

<sup>4</sup> Centre de Pastorale Liturgique, 11 rue Perronet, Neuilly (Seine); A.-G. Martimort, A.-M. Roguet, directors.

<sup>5</sup> *La Maison-Dieu*, 29, boulevard de Latour-Maubourg, Paris, (VII).

<sup>6</sup> Associated Parishes, Inc., No. 6 Carroll St., Madison, Wisconsin.

<sup>7</sup> Parish and People, Lower Heyford Rectory, Oxford; Rev. Kenneth Packard, secretary.

<sup>8</sup> Liturgisches Institut, Windstrasse 2, Trier; Johannes Wagner, director.

<sup>9</sup> Volksliturgisches Apostolat, Chorherrenstift Klosterneuburg, Klosterneuburg, Vienna.

Klosterneuburg where it carries on the work begun by Pius Parsch.

In 1947 the Liturgical Movement in the Roman Catholic Church received its strongest official support to date in the papal encyclical, *Mediator Dei*.<sup>10</sup> The Pope said that 'the most pressing duty of Christians is to live the liturgical life and increase and cherish its supernatural spirit'. Significantly he also defined liturgy as the worship rendered by the entire Body, Head and members together. The encyclical was given even greater importance when a revised rite for the Vigil of Easter was allowed experimentally in 1950 and made official in 1956. The official recognition which the Liturgical Movement has received in the Roman Catholic Church in the last ten years is something to be reckoned with.

Among the Protestant churches, the Liturgical Movement has gained a small but significant place. As early as 1930, Brilioth's book, *Eucharistic Faith and Practice*, had been translated into English by Fr. Hebert. At this time at least a few of the Swedish Lutheran Church were aware of the corporate and social significance of the sacraments. The Iona Community must be counted as one of the most important witnesses within Protestantism to the social responsibility of the Church which receives such strong emphasis in the Liturgical Movement. This group discovered anew the role of the sacraments in community life and contributed a tremendous amount to Protestant churches through its courage in carrying out ideas in experiment and practice.

The most far-reaching experiment to date in the Protestant Liturgical Movement is the French Reformed Community of Taizé<sup>11</sup> in Burgundy. The community has expressed itself in many different directions—in its theology, in its development of a common liturgical life, in its ecumenical spirit both towards Protestantism and Rome, in its mission to the neigh-

<sup>10</sup> *Mediator Dei*, American Press ed., par. 197.

<sup>11</sup> Communauté de Taizé, Taizé, par Cormatin, (Saône et Loire), France. The books by one of its members, Max Thurian, are in process of translation. *Confession* appeared in 1958; *Marriage and Celibacy* will follow in 1959 (SCM Press).

bourhood and to the world, and in its Christian artistic expressions.<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps the principal conclusions we can draw from this very sketchy picture of the highlights of the two Liturgical Movements is that a definite shift has taken place throughout the Church in the nature and importance of liturgical life. Though many of the events which have taken place bear no outward connection with each other, there seems to be a common thread running through them all. We can say that there has been a shift from Christian tradition for its own sake, the externals of ceremonial, religious individualism, and the exclusively Roman tradition, to a much more factual knowledge of the basis of liturgy, an awareness of the role of the laity, a concern for society, a concern for church unity, an awakening to the mission of the church, a realization of the Church as the Body of Christ, and a renewed awareness of the Bible. It has been suggested (by Anglicans!) that during the Oxford Movement, the Church of England gained many insights from the Church of Rome which have now become part of our tradition, and that now the Church of Rome is beginning to learn some of the things which the Church of England realized at the Reformation. Though this point of view may be a useful debating point in ecumenical discussions, it might be more accurate to say that both the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches are beginning to reach simultaneously a third point of view which they can both share, but which is quite *different* from the one they inherited historically.

### *Why does the Church need the Liturgical Movement?*

The main difference between the renewal of the Church as seen by the Liturgical Movement and the same renewal as seen by other movements in the Church today—evangelistic preaching, the Christian social witness, and so on—is the *level*

<sup>12</sup> An account of recent developments in the French-speaking world will be found in J.-D. Benoit: *Liturgical Renewal: Catholic and Protestant Developments on the Continent* (SCM Press 1958).



at which it sees the problem of renewal. Obviously a multiplicity of witnesses are needed today if the revival of the Church is going to be complete. More often than not these witnesses are quite aware how much they need each other if they are to form a whole. Yet the Liturgical Movement cannot help making the claim that it is working at the 'depth level' of the problem. Though it rejoices in all these manifestations of the Holy Spirit, it believes that sooner or later they must all turn to the praise of God in the liturgy as their fulfilment. The fundamental problem of all revival is, How can the Church be the Church? The answer is, of course, that there are many ways for the Church to be the Church. Yet behind each way there is the inevitable need to express the fact that 'Ye are the Body'. The liturgy is quite simply the climactic expression in this world of our incorporation into Christ.

We can realize best why the Church needs the Liturgical Movement by looking at the level of understanding of the Christian faith in an average congregation. This level is well summed up by T. O. Wedel in his study of contemporary religion in America called *The Christianity of Main Street*. Wedel characterizes the religion of the average man as 'Golden Rule Idealism'. It is a religion of moralism built on a rather shallow understanding of doing to others what you would have them do to you. The religion of the majority today is 'a sincere acceptance of the moral ideals of Christ'. Two things about this religion are clear. First, that the religion of the majority of Christians is watered down to a belief in following the moral teachings of Jesus, 'the best of men'. Second, that the average man believes he is living up to the morality which Jesus advocated. Biblical Christianity, Wedel concludes, is an unknown religion today for the vast majority.

There are many criticisms to be made of this false Christianity. But the crux of the matter is that the average man has no clue to the point of view from which the entire New Testament was written—the existence of the Church, the divine society, the Body of Christ: this life in the Body is the gulf

that separates Biblical Christianity from the false alternatives one meets today. The principal function of the local church today ought to be to give a sense of the Body to the congregation. Certainly a very great deal hinges on whether a group within the congregation has this sense. No wonder mediocrity is so often the mark of life in the Church if the laity can find no challenge to their religion of moralism. The revival of the local church will depend on whether this moralism is being challenged by a genuine Christian community.

The liturgy is the best and highest example of the meaning of life in the Christian community, for 'the liturgy is the Body of Christ at prayer'. A church which is teaching participation in the liturgy is challenging at every point a religion of moralism and the Golden Rule. To the man who believes that moralism based vaguely on the teachings of Jesus is enough, the liturgy shows the Resurrected Christ, living in the midst of His Church and coming afresh at the Breaking of the Bread. To the man who believes he is capable of keeping the Golden Rule, the liturgy shows the pitifulness of our own efforts to please God apart from Christ and tells him that he must offer all he has in the offertory, which is still not enough. To the mediocrity of our faith and practice, the liturgy shows the total self-giving of Christ. To the religious individualist desiring to remain separate from his neighbours, the liturgy insists on the inadequacy of any religion apart from love of neighbour and says that we have all been organically united in baptism.

Liturgy is the canvas on which the parish learns graphically what it means to be the Church. As we will go on to suggest, there seems often to be a definite connection between lack of understanding of and participation in the liturgy and a lack of mission in the church. It may well be that a sense of mission in the church only comes to birth when the Church realizes who it is. As long as we go on thinking that we are a collection of individuals, little of significance can happen. Yet when we realize that we have been joined together to embody the self-offering of Christ as exemplified in the liturgy, then mission

begins. The mission of the church is to be the *Body*, the *group* joined together in Christ. It is the community, the cell, the team which bears the responsibility for carrying on the mission.

*What is the parish?*

After some consideration, we have chosen an approach to the Liturgical Movement by way of the local church because it is the local neighbourhood which holds the key to a deeper understanding of the liturgy. The local church holds the key to the mission of the church also, but we will have more to say about that later. Because the background of the neighbourhood is so important to both liturgy and mission, it is essential that we have a complete picture of what we mean by the parish.

Abbé Meurice in his book written with Abbé Michonneau, *Catholic Action and the Parish*, makes some helpful distinctions about the different levels of the word 'parish' which we believe it might be profitable to use. We must remember, however, that these levels are not important in themselves. It is only as they help to clarify the confusing picture of the parish that they have any value. If we give them an importance above that of the people who live to express God's love for the world, then they become empty jargon. The idea of the 'parish' is three-fold, says Meurice, and all these three levels must be held in tension for the parish mission to be fully effective. First, there is the parish as the sum total of individuals, groups, and influences within a given geographical area. 'A determinate group of people with their technical, economic, and social characteristics, located in a specific place, and subject to certain influences. These facts will be the object of a sociological investigation which should take into account the history of the group as well as its possibilities for the future.'<sup>13</sup> This basic level of 'parish' has perhaps been too much overlooked particularly in the church which operates on a congregational basis.

<sup>13</sup> *Catholic Action and the Parish*, Michonneau and Meurice, p. 92.



Emphasis on the 'gathered church', the local body of church-members can lead to the needs of the majority of people in an area being forgotten.

But in any situation this level has to be kept constantly in mind if the Church is not to become abstracted from the real situation it faces. This is certainly the most obvious level on which to begin some sort of co-operation between the various congregations in a given area because all are subject to the same sociological influences. This sense of its 'parish' is affecting every congregation in the area. We are going to have to realize that this sociological level of the parish is also the missionary level, and unless congregations are taking responsibility for this level, they are failing in their commission to preach the Gospel to every creature. The parish ecumenical spirit, for which more and more we are going to have to fight, is at heart the missionary spirit. It is the acceptance of responsibility for the mission of the Church which ought to be the uniting factor among the various congregations. Indeed what genuine need for an ecumenical spirit can there be apart from the missionary spirit?

In the city or suburban congregation, it is unreasonable to think that the congregation or the clergy can easily accept their responsibility without a good deal of help. It is not easy to know and understand the many groups and social pressures which go to make up the neighbourhood. A great deal of help can be derived from the science of sociology, which helps us to break down and describe the various component parts of a complex society.<sup>14</sup>

Secondly, there is the parish in the sense of 'congregation'—the people who consciously ally themselves with the church in the neighbourhood. The danger comes when we begin to confuse the congregation with the parish. We will find in this group men, women, and children in every conceivable stage

<sup>14</sup> Four Church of England parishes in Birmingham were studied a few years ago: see *The Church's Understanding of Itself* by R. H. T. Thompson (SCM Press, 1957). See also Canon E. R. Wickham's notable study of Sheffield, *Church and People in an Industrial City* (Lutterworth, 1958).

of spiritual development—from those who are seen twice a year to the most militant. But that does not matter for the moment. They are the potential. They are all part of the great community of worship who gather week by week. They are the liturgical assembly. Here we have the 'liturgical' level of the parish in the sense that they are the gathered community.

The third level of 'parish' is what might be called the 'inner essence' of the parish. We mean that small group who give themselves completely to the task of discovering God's vocation for them in their given situation. These are the people who share with the clergy the responsibility for the vision of the local church. The vast importance of this group within the congregation is being re-discovered in many parts of the Church today. This is what the American Episcopal Church calls the 'concerned group'. In Catholic Action, they are called 'the militants'. We believe that the principal function of the minister today in terms of a missionary strategy is to build up this 'inner essence' of the parish. The mission of the parish is going to stand or fall on whether the clergy are spending time on this task of training the few in leadership.

In order for the mission of the local church to become clearly focused, we must look to either end of the parish—the sociological level, and the inner essence who are anxious to join the clergy in doing and acting. This third level—the inner essence—is naturally the spearhead of the mission in the parish, yet behind it must be the support of the liturgical assembly. Actually it is to these three terms within the definition of parish that we shall return again and again as we begin to see how deeply these three need and affect each other. We hope to show how closely the missionary, apostolic side is bound up with the liturgical, communal side. And not only how closely each is bound up in the other, but indeed how each is *defective* without the other. What we are seeking is an approach to the Church which will unite the two components often out of touch with each other—worship and the world, liturgy and society.

*What is a parish Liturgical Movement?*

Essentially we believe that one of the most pressing responsibilities of the congregation is to participate in the sacramental world of Christ's mysteries. Our duty particularly today is to live the mysteries<sup>15</sup> of Christ. It is a duty for two reasons. First simply because these mysteries are the Godward mystical side of the Body of Christ, and we are that Body. This Godward side is something which is all too little emphasized in the Church today, yet it is something which is fundamental to the Church, as is shown by the importance the Book of Common Prayer attaches to the Liturgical Year. If we are the Body, then we must be all the things that Christ is. We must die with Him, we must rise with Him, we must ascend into heaven with Him. The most real fact about us as Christians must be this life of ours which is hid in God with Christ. Our humanity is in heaven because Christ reigns there with the Father.

The life of Christ in us is indeed expressed in day to day living within the Body. We die with Him when we give up our own will for the love of another. And we are glorified with Him when we put our trust in God and new life rises out of the darkness. We receive God's grace through human mediation. Yet this experience of life in the Body must be strengthened by living the mysteries of Christ from Advent to Pentecost. It is through the grace and understanding of the mysteries we receive in the life of the Godward side of the Body that we are able to receive the fullness of that grace in the manward side. In order to be the Body, the Church must look both ways—up into heaven and out towards men. The Church runs a continual danger of a false spirituality, but it is a danger which she must risk. In spite of the ineffectiveness of the Church, it seems that there is more danger today of her losing the Godward side than the manward.

<sup>15</sup> The very word 'mystery' is one that is still unfamiliar in this sense to many of us. But it is soundly Biblical. See, for example, Mark 4.11, Eph. 3.3-9, Eph. 5.32.



A parish Liturgical Movement is an active desire to help the congregation to find ways of expressing creatively these mysteries of Christ. It is a movement towards participation in Christ more deeply and significantly in the two 'liturgical communities' of the parish—the Sunday assembly of the parish community and the daily assembly of the family community. Any sort of movement must be experimental; and though there is a particular danger in experimenting where human relationships are concerned, we feel that the time has come for liturgical experiment in these two groups. We must find ways in which they can be more truly expressive of their life in Christ.

In the Anglican Communion there is a certain danger of the Book of Common Prayer becoming a stone of stumbling rather than a resource to the Church. By obeying the letter of the law, we may end by destroying the intent of the Prayer Book. Certainly this intent was to provide a common form of worship in a common language. Its intent was to be both corporate and communicative. If the Church does not understand what it is trying to communicate, no amount of change in the outward words of worship will be of any great help.

The local church is the ideal setting for the Liturgical Movement because it can bring out so well its inner implications. The local church is a 'religious community' and yet lives fully in the world. Liturgy demands community life, and the local church provides it. Nothing has to be manufactured. This is both the test and the glory of a parish Liturgical Movement. Can it in the midst of all this potential and unfulfilment, this chaos and this order, this indifference and this concern form the parish community, be the Body which incarnates the spirit of the liturgy? It is here in this mass of human needs and relationships that the liturgy comes to life. Incarnation is the link between the liturgy and the neighbourhood. Heaven comes to earth as the Body becomes what it is, member by member, and the liturgy is lived situation by situation. The Incarnation is re-enacted as the congregation learns how to offer in the liturgy and offer in their lives. The aim of the parish Liturgical



Movement is no less than this in its deepest aspect—Incarnation. To join the mysteries of the incarnated, crucified, risen, ascended Lord with the life of the parish. But first we must gaze up into heaven and participate in that life which descends into the midst of mankind.

*The purpose of this book*

One of the principal things which is needed today is a way of life, a *modus vivendi*, which suits the changed conditions of today. The old way of life to which we have grown so accustomed was largely the product of the 19th century. Liturgically, among Anglicans, this was expressed in the usual round of 'the eight o'clock' followed by 'High Mattins' or 'High Mass', followed (in the Church of England) by Evensong. Outside of worship there came the hordes of parish societies and organizations, the easy identification of the Church with middle-class ideals of respectability and morality, the separation of the Church from its society, and a high degree of individualism. This is the stereotyped structure which one finds largely in any parish of the Anglican Communion, and it has its counterparts in the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic Churches. The main criticism we have of this pattern of life is that it is so unexpressive of what life in the Church is. It is an adequate enough machine, but in the missionary situation, it is not equal to the task.

We need to find a way of life in the Church which both helps us to be better Christians and tells the pagan world something important about ourselves as in Christ. We must have a form of life which is *organic* to the nature of the Church. This means some expression of life in the Church which says that we are essentially a community joined together in Christ and not just a collection of individuals who happen to have a taste for religion. We must find a way which will give full scope to the lay ministry. We need a way which emphasizes the importance of the home in the Church, which gives room for sacrifice and love of a radical nature, which imaginatively interprets

liturgical life, a way in which the Church can meet the world. This is a way of life which is struggling to be born in the Church today. We have seen signs of it in the 'House-Church' at Halton, in the community life at Taizé, in the teams of the *Mission de France*, in the Iona Community in Scotland. It has not come yet, but it is coming. What is needed now more than anything is experiment. We need a handful of clergy and a few militant laymen who are willing to attempt anything in the name of the Gospel.

We hope that no one will think that in what follows we are trying to give a set of directions which will produce the desired result. In fact one of the most conclusive things I was taught on my travels as this book was in the making is that it is useless to think in terms of numerical success. What we are describing will never be popular or easy. We must prepare ourselves for failure and for indifference. Yet these things are crying out to be attempted by the concerned. If life in the Church is life in the Holy Spirit, then they must be attempted. We cannot quench the Spirit. Here we lay before you not a blueprint, but a few working sketches of what *is being done* in the Church today.

## **2    *The Local Church Begins to Accept Its Task: The Parish and Sociology***

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ONE OF THE first steps towards the Church becoming the Church is a realization by both clergy and congregation of the task that they have undertaken jointly. Too often both clergy and people have been content not to question the purpose of the Church in the community, and as a result the local church has become just another social service in the community. Yet the local church has no reason for existence unless it sees itself in what is at heart a revolutionary role. This role is the acceptance of responsibility for the direction, motives, and goals of all society which falls within its orbit. The task of the local church is to change both individuals and social groups. No matter how dimly, the congregation must begin to realize, with the clergy, that they have taken on a task which reaches far beyond themselves. Both Christianity and Communism see the magnitude of their tasks from much the same standpoint. Both are oriented towards the total social organism. Because most Christians today think that religion is an individual affair, the sights of the congregation are going to have to be raised on this matter.

Without fully realizing it, both minister and people may be quite separated from the local society. There is a dangerous tendency, particularly in the 'successful' congregation, for the Church to spin its own little world around its activities, while blissfully ignoring the vast majority who are outside the fold. We have become so used to these conditions that we tend to identify them as the norm. One of the most difficult things for the minister and people to face together is the unreality of this cosy little world of the congregation for the neighbourhood as

a whole. The proof of this unreality may come if the congregation begins to look for concrete instances of change which have taken place in the neighbourhood due to the witness of members of the congregation. By 'change' we mean: has the congregation contributed anything to the solution of a local racial problem? Have they clarified political issues from a Christian standpoint to both voters and politicians? Have they got alongside people in the neighbourhood who are considered 'not nice'?

Social scientists tell us that today people are influenced in their opinions, habits, etc., from 60% to 90% by their environment. If this is true, the Church cannot hope to make a significant impression on individuals unless it is active in changing the environment to one in which Christian values of reverence for God and neighbour are expressed. Nearly the whole burden of the sixteen years' experience of the *Mission de France* has been to underline the importance of the environment to the mission of the Church. With the growing standardization of society, milieu is playing an even greater role. The local church can no longer remain aloof from such facts. Both priest and people will have to learn what the influence of their environment is on them. They will have to learn how to question this environment and perhaps even change it. Père Loew summed it up well after missionary experience in the slums of Marseilles. 'It is not only the people who have ceased to be Christian, but also—and *this is far more serious*—the things around them, the institutions, the contexts of daily life.'<sup>1</sup> Sociology can be a great help to us as we try to understand these institutions.

The local church needs to have a factual picture of the neighbourhood. The congregation may think that it knows the neighbourhood fairly well; but, particularly if the area is an urban or suburban one, this is doubtful. But any local church needs a framework within which to see its social role even if it is a country parish with a handful of people. A factual picture gives a heightened degree of reality to any work the

<sup>1</sup> *Mission to the Poorest*, M. R. Loew, p. 112.



congregation undertakes, because they can see what they are doing in terms of the true situation which exists. This is in fact the very basis of a parish Liturgical Movement because liturgy begins with the people, *all* the people.

Urban congregations concerned with the missionary expansion of the Church have shown that the old conception of the 'parish' as an area constituted by certain geographical boundaries is not always realistic.<sup>2</sup> This is because nowadays the local community in which people live is not necessarily the community in which they spend the majority of their time. The 'work community' or the 'recreational community' may be of much greater importance to the individual. Both of these are apt to fall outside the parish boundaries. The more realistic understanding of the 'parish' may be on a functional basis; that is, on the basis of the activities of the people. In any event the parish church has to keep this functional basis of 'parish' constantly in mind. It must realize that it has areas of responsibility to all communities in which its members work and play. There is less and less room today for parochialism or congregationalism. Often the only single unit in which we can think is the city or town. Because the strategy of the local church must be geared to these functional communities, there is bound to be overlapping and co-operation with other congregations who share the same communities.

### *Getting the Facts*

There are basically three areas of facts with which the congregation should be familiar in accepting its social role. How it obtains these facts should be watched carefully. The local church is not a sociological bureau for collecting data. There are more important things at stake than whether the congregation gets a detailed picture of the neighbourhood, and a great deal of harm may be done to the mission if the neigh-

<sup>2</sup> See for example the discriminating discussion of 'The Parish Today' by Miss M. E. Batten in *Essays in Anglican Self-Criticism* (ed. David M. Paton, SCM Press, 1958).

bourhood gets the idea that the first interest of the congregation in them is as a sociological statistic. In the long run the parish will have to weigh the importance of this resource to the mission against the wrong impression it could create. Perhaps some very tentative efforts could be tried to see what sort of reaction is aroused. The neighbourhood might well interpret this move rightly as a sign of genuine human concern. In any event the congregation must try to form some picture of these three groups of facts.

*Who are the people who live within the neighbourhood?*

This is the place to begin. A demographic study of the area is called for. This means a graphic representation of the population of the zone done from a number of different angles—economic status, educational status, age, housing, etc. A separate map of the zone is coloured in on the basis of the figures for each factor surveyed. The advantage of a demographic study is that it correlates both people and geography.

Before you begin, the limits of the study must be set. For churches which operate on a congregational basis, the 'parish boundaries' have to be determined. This may be a difficult task due to the fact that many of the congregation come some distance to church, but some arbitrary limits must be set. The census figures for the particular area can give us some of the information we want. This would help in telling us the exact numbers, numbers of children, income, etc. In some communities this information would be reasonably up to date. The city or county authorities ought to be a help also in drawing up this demographic picture of the parish. If this information cannot be collected from the national or local authorities, probably the best thing to do is to run a 'random sampling' of the area. In this method one hopes to get a valid cross-section of the field by picking data in the given field completely at random. The area is divided into streets as units, and an interviewer is assigned to each street. He picks completely at random a certain number of houses

to visit and does this by listing each house on a separate slip of paper, and drawing a given proportion of the whole number.

To the professional sociologist, this sort of pseudo-scientific procedure doubtless brings feelings of alarm. But we suspect that as long as the congregation is not under the impression that it is engaging in scientific research, this simple application of sociology to the parish will have a value. Though the results can only be very roughly accurate, it does not matter. The principal business of the local church is mission and not sociology; and if this exercise produces an 'us' orientation between the congregation and the parish rather than a 'we-they' one, then it will have served its purpose well.

*What is the 'religious observance' of the neighbourhood?*

The second study called for is a factual account of the extent of religious practice in the neighbourhood. What percentage attend church at least twice a year? What is the attendance record of those who do? What percentage of children are baptized? What percentage come to Sunday School? What percentage belong to organizations? These are the questions which must be answered in the second study.

If this study of religious observance is going to be a genuine parish study and not merely a congregational one, obviously one of the first things we are going to have to do is get the co-operation of other denominations in the area. The very minimal assistance for this study to take place would be access to the records of other churches. Probably a much greater degree of co-operation will be needed. Since the advantages are so evident of all churches in the area having a picture of what percentage of the population is being reached by the church, this might be the logical place to begin to develop an ecumenical spirit in the area. This study could become a 'trial run' on the problems of co-operation. After talks among the clergy, each church might be willing to give the time of two or three laymen to assist in getting this information.

One simple way of getting some rough idea of the amount



of religious observance in the parish would be a 'spot check' one Sunday. This is a method which Boulard, the well-known French Catholic sociologist, suggests. Unannounced one Sunday, every person attending every church in the area is given a questionnaire as he enters the church building. He is asked a few simple questions which by their wording indicate the extent of his participation in the church. A Sunday must be picked which is as 'normal' as possible.

The local congregations must, of course, take into account the numbers living within the neighbourhood who attend churches outside the area. These figures in themselves might be an eye-opener to the congregations. An effort should be made to check over the records in a few larger congregations outside the neighbourhood to see what these numbers are.

When these figures have been obtained, they must be tabulated simply. Following the lead of the French Catholic social scientists, we might work out these facts in terms of the various zones of the parish and create something called 'religious geography.' This is something like the demographic study of which we spoke, only using religious rather than secular facts. You sort out the percentage of religious observance street by street and colour in a map of the area to show the percentages. Another method might be to tabulate the figures profession by profession, comparing the total numbers of the profession in the zone with their religious practice.

*What is the depth of Christian opinion in the neighbourhood?*

A third study, more difficult and less accurate than the second, might follow the second. We might call this a 'religious public opinion poll'. It would be valuable for the local church to have some idea of what prevailing public opinions are on religious and social questions. What would in fact be measured would be the practical effect of religious belief on the community. To what extent is the Christian viewpoint still residual in the community?



For this study we would pick at random a number of individuals to be interviewed. It makes no difference whether they are church attenders because the field of inquiry is the entire zone. In fact it would be much better if we could get some group outside the church to conduct this study so that there would be a more honest expression of opinion from church attenders! Questions should be framed which would reveal the extent of Christian opinion on controversial social issues, as well as the prevailing attitude towards the church and church attenders. Such questions as: Do you believe profit alone should be the dominating factor in the way a business is run? As a parent would you be willing for your child to make friends with another child who is known to have a police record? Do you believe church attendance is unnecessary so long as you are kind to others? Do you believe church attenders to be snobbish? And then other questions such as: Do you know personally a clergyman in the neighbourhood? If you are not a church attender, what is the main reason you do not attend?

The answers to these questions would be a real eye-opener to the clergy. This might even be enough in itself to trigger a parish mission in the mind of the clergy. In any event, the questions ought to be very carefully chosen and tried out in a 'test run' with a selected group to see if they are going to get the desired result.

### 3 *The Roots of the Mission*

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The awakening of the local church to its vocation as a missionary centre has brought with it a need to clarify the roles of minister and layman. There has been a particular interest in finding a fuller expression of the key role of the layman. This expression has largely centred around the concept of the lay priesthood, which has engendered much the same enthusiasm as was the case in the Reformation. The concept has opened up new and creative possibilities for Christians who do not normally think of themselves *or* their ministers as priests. They have found here an expression rooted firmly in the Bible and the writers of the early Church.

The crux of the matter has been the discovery that the missionary problem is a priestly problem. This has been the experience of Abbé Michonneau. It is perhaps one of the deepest insights into the inner nature of the Church because it provides the link between liturgy and mission. The Church is being the Church when it is expressing its inner priesthood. And this priesthood must be manifested in two ways—towards God in the liturgy and towards man in the mission.

#### *The priesthood of Christ*

The essential point in any thinking about the priesthood is to begin with the high priesthood of Christ as in Hebrews 5.1. There is here neither the priesthood of the minister nor the priesthood of the laity. There is only the priesthood of Christ as it is expressed in either order. The basis of priesthood is the offering of sacrifices. This offering of sacrifices means essentially gift-giving to God, and the *only* thing we can offer to God is everything. Hence the Latin word for priest is

*sacerdos*—the giver of sacred gifts. We must, of course, be clear about what we mean by sacrifice because of the medieval tendency to identify sacrifice with the death of the victim. The essential part of sacrifice is not death. This is part of the greater theme of the pleasure and love in giving everything to God. Sacrifice is not an end in itself; it is only the expression of that absolute love which exists in the giver. In the testimony of the early Church, the Christian sacrifice is a 'sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving', eucharistic in its deepest nature.

But the representative character of priesthood is equally essential. When a man offers the gift of himself to God, there is priesthood; but it is only individual priesthood. For priesthood to reach its goal it must be representative. The fulness of priesthood is to be able to offer the gift for others. And to do this the giver has to have the authority to offer his gift in the name of the community.

It is Christ alone who is able to fulfil both qualifications of priesthood perfectly. He offered the gift of His entire self with perfect love to the Father, and He did it as the full representative of the human race on behalf of all mankind. It is this picture of Christ the High Priest of humanity as seen in Hebrews which ought to hold the attention of the Church. Christ is essentially priest. This is important because the focus from which we see Christ is going to determine how we think about the mission of the Church and ultimately what we do within this mission.

The crucial question is, of course, how is this priesthood realized in the Church? It is at this point that we need to rethink the sacrament of baptism. We hear much about baptism being for the forgiveness of sins and the washing of our souls, somewhat less about baptism incorporating us into the Body and making us the people of God, and practically nothing at all about baptism conferring on us the priesthood of Christ. And yet this is the most important fact about priesthood—the priesthood of the *laos*, the people of God. The priesthood of the minister is something which is dependent on this essential priesthood of Christ given at baptism. The

Christian mystery of baptism is the mystery of priesthood in the midst of God's people and thus in the midst of the contemporary world.

*The priesthood of the layman*

Jacques Ellul, the French Protestant lawyer-theologian, says in *The Presence of the Kingdom*, ' . . . When the Gospel is preached, its message no longer reaches the world. The channel through which the Gospel should reach the world—and does not—ought to be the "layman", living the tension which we have just described. He is the "point of contact" between the ideologies of the world in which he lives and theology. . . .'<sup>1</sup> Here we have precisely the basis of lay priesthood in the laity's ability to remain just where they are in the world without being 'set apart' in the sense that the professional minister is. The uniqueness of the laity's vocation is to be a 'point of contact'. By their priesthood they become 'sacraments of society'.

It is essential to the mission to have a priesthood which is grounded in the life of the world. Without this great emphasis on humanity and the world, there is no priesthood. It was only through the Incarnation that Christ became priest. The sacrifice which He offered as priest could only be offered on behalf of man inasmuch as He was man. Because the layman lives so completely in the midst of the world, at every turning he has opportunities to be a priest among men. The field of his priesthood is his 'world', all that his life touches. Because each layman lives in a different 'world', he alone can offer the gift of himself to this 'world' as an offering to God. The minister cannot do this in the same deep sense that a layman can.

The role of the lay priesthood is 'engagement' in the world, involvement in the world, commitment to the world. The layman who remains aloof from the problems of the world violates the priesthood to which he was committed in baptism.

<sup>1</sup> Jacques Ellul, *The Presence of the Kingdom*, p. 19.



There must be no move to draw little circles around groups or institutions which are labelled 'Christian'. This would be no more than a subtle form of remaining separate from the world. It is not a question of redeeming the world by bringing it inside the bounds of the Church. It is that the laymen must *go to* the world and remain there, redeeming it from the inside. This is the way of Christ's Incarnation—to enter into the entire situation, not to root up the evil from the outside.

Perhaps it becomes clearer now why the congregation must face the neighbourhood and why we suggested the social survey of the parish. It is only as the congregation begins to enter fully into the life of the neighbourhood that it is able to exercise its priesthood.

This position of the layman in the world is both ambiguous and full of tension. He is fully in the world, but not of the world. He must remain and do his part while around him he sees the world rejecting his offering of love. He cannot retreat into a closed circle of Christians who share his views. Because the layman lives in two worlds, he has a unique gift to give. He must make the gift at all costs, and he will discover that the cost is indeed great.

### *The role of the minister*

There is a need today for a re-evaluation of the role of the minister on the basis of missionary priorities. Following the lead of the *Mission de France*, we must assert that the principal function of the minister is to father, train, and sustain a militant laity. In this the minister is irreplaceable. He is not merely an apostle: he is apostle par excellence. This is the first priority today: the training of a small, militant laity in their lay priesthood. We must look at the minister's role from this standpoint.

In the local church the minister offers three sacrifices or sacred gifts—the sacrifice of Christ in the liturgy, the sacrifice of his people, and the sacrifice of himself. It is his task to keep these offerings in the closest possible contact. Would it be an

overstatement to say that the minister has no authority to offer the sacrifice of Christ in the Eucharist unless he is offering the sacrifice of himself on behalf of his people and the sacrifice of his people on behalf of the world?

The goal of this joint sacrifice is to form the Body of Christ in that corner of the world which has been entrusted to him. His job is to 'assemble' a shapeless number of individuals into an organic, living body. In other words his task is to see that the very bond of charity and peace and unity exists among his people. This bond of peace cannot exist until the congregation learns through life together with both Christians and non-Christians the importance of giving the gift of themselves to the world. His task is to teach them they are the salt of the earth, the leaven in the lump of society.

### *Priesthood of love*

Through priesthood we are rediscovering today the role of love. Without it priesthood is quite impossible. Humanly speaking, the ability of a man to be a priest depends on his ability to love others who have no particular claim to his love. As one team of clergy explained the success of the mission to their neighbourhood, 'We are a showcase for love'. This zealous love for the world is not just a clerical work of supererogation. It is simply the warmth of the Divine Fire which burns within all priesthood. It is a strange gift which he has been given by Christ and by the laity—strange from the world's eyes. He has been given the privilege of forming and assembling the Body of Christ. And the price which he must pay in order to receive this gift is the total gift of himself to them. 'For their sakes I sanctify myself.'<sup>2</sup> The priest accepts an essentially sacrificial task and is paid by being allowed to sacrifice everything! This is the world's sense of values turned upside down. Everything is measured in terms of giving rather than receiving.

Though we might quarrel with the statement theologically,

<sup>2</sup> John 17.19.

it is all too true in fact that the minister is the congregation's way of access to God. His whole life is dedicated to revealing the mysteries of God to the world. We have only to look to the congregations of the Church today which are moribund to know that it depends on him whether the Holy Spirit is moving through the life of the people. The existence of a holy people, a militant laity, is within his hands.

## 4 *The Structure of the Mission*

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CARDINAL SUHARD has told us that it will be the glory of our generation to discover that the new situation of mankind called for new apostolic conditions. The Church today is bit by bit learning how to live under these conditions, yet what is it we are moving away from? Largely a mid-nineteenth century pattern which was based on building up a strong congregational life without too much regard for the local society. In this pattern the goal is to get people to church services and church organizations willy-nilly. The size of the congregation and the number of groups covered by church organizations is the criterion of success. The idea is to bring people within this charmed circle where it is assumed that the Gospel is bound to make an impression on them. The meaning of the word 'church' in this pattern is apt to denote a place rather than primarily people. What this pattern tends to do is to set up its own little microcosm in competition with the social structures of the real world outside. The net result is that though Christians participate in the society of the church, what is really affecting their decisions is, of course, the social structures of the real world. What happens in fact is that the church becomes a sort of leisure time activity or a sort of club. If this sketch of the 'old pattern' seems exaggerated, at least it shows us what we want to avoid in the new.

What are the outlines of the new pattern? Basically we take this pattern to be an attempt to provide an answer to the various needs of our neighbours and our neighbourhood. We believe that on the basis of what has been done in missionary parishes in the last 15 years, the Church is going to have to be concerned indeed with 'bringing men to Christ', but in a fuller sense than we have understood in the past. As the Iona



Community has witnessed so strongly, it does little good to bring a man to Christ unless you are going to bring his society along with him. The evangelical offer will be forever relevant, but the Church will have to learn how to fish with 'neither a line nor a net, but rather change the water in the pond'.

What else can the mission of the Church mean than to conform the world to the perfect humanity of Christ? And further, what else are we doing when we build up the human qualities of love between man and man, but forming implicitly the Body of Christ in the world? In the words of the Maundy Thursday hymn, 'Where love and charity abide, there is God'.

The non-Christian world today has to be shown the genuineness of the love of Christians. Though perhaps we have not known it, in the past it has been an open question how genuine our Christian love for individuals has been. In the words of Ernest Southcott, our main concern for individuals has been much too often as 'pew fodder'. We have been more concerned with the success of the Church than with being the children of God. The point is that we will have to start loving people enough to accept them where they are rather than herding them into church when they are nowhere near ready for worship. When are we going to stop unwittingly using people for some other end, rather than loving them for themselves?<sup>1</sup>

We want now to try to pinpoint some of the implications to be drawn from this orientation of the Church's mission. What is the structure of the mission? What is the basis of the Church's way of life in the missionary church?

### *The Church is people*

First, we are going to have to have a much more decentralized conception of the Church. The word 'church' tends today to

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the words of Bishop K. H. Ting of China: 'In the last few years Chinese Christians have come to see how much we really lacked love. If you do not find people lovable, you cannot really want them to be evangelized, and if you do not really want to evangelize them, God cannot put His word into your mouth. And to the people whom we do not love, the things we say cleverly do not seem worth saying.'

mean first the church building. Probably secondly it means the clergy, and only thirdly does it denote the people. One of the primary barriers to the mission is just this localized or clericalized concept of the Church. One of the primary things the leadership of the local church must do is to teach the congregation that 'church' equals people and not building. We must restore the proper balance between the house of God and the people of God. It must be made clear that wherever the people go, there the Church goes. There is an expression used in the church in Halton about the laity being 'the Church in dispersion'. This ought to be the foundation stone of the mission of the local church. We must get the laity to see themselves *as* dispersed and not huddled together inside the doors of the church. The whole basis of the way of life we envision is getting the laity to feel at home *as Christians* in the world. They must realize that this is where they belong. It is easy enough to get groups of keen Christians together today when they have to make no connexion between their love of God and their neighbour who has no clue to God's love. But to know that you are at home in the world is to be forced to make this connexion. An important part of the priest's job is to help laymen to make this change of focus from the church building to the world.

### *Christians and their community*

Secondly, the laity will have to learn how to enter into their world as Christians. We all live in some sort of neighbourhood, but as any civic leader will tell you, there are few who are willing to take the trouble to exercise any sort of leadership in the community. In suburban neighbourhoods where there is a maximum opportunity for social intercourse, often Christians do not even know the names of the people on their street. From a Christian standpoint this is a scandal. Neighbourliness and friendliness are the substance of the mission to society. Christians ought to be consciously widening their circle of friends at home and at work, the two principal milieux

which they have to influence. In the process of knowing more and more people they will begin to see certain patterns emerging. They will begin to see what the social groupings are and who are the leaders for good or ill. They will discover the bases of neighbourhood tensions, the factors of motivation in the community. Which individuals are making their decisions on Christian principles? Which social forces are blocking understanding between individuals? What are the points of contact with the Church in the neighbourhood? Which doors might be opened to the Church? The layman is of course not just an observer of his neighbourhood. He observes as he engages himself in it. He is performing a continuous action in the neighbourhood, the action of a bridge builder between man and man and ultimately between man and God. He acts slowly and 'invisibly' as relationships between himself and his neighbours deepen and mature. He loves God by loving well his milieu.

The laity will often have to learn how to create community in their neighbourhood. Not only do the laity have to enter in, they must learn how to engage in a corporate search for community with both Christians of other denominations and with non-Christians. This is the goal of the Christian's acceptance of his society. It is here in the attempt to build community that the layman experiences acutely the tension between what the world ought to be if all men knew Christ and the reality that the Gospel is not heard. He experiences a dim shadow of the tensions God must feel in His love for the world.

### *Lay Spirituality*

Thirdly, there is a great need for a relevant lay spirituality in this way of life the Church is beginning to discover today. We need a spirituality which sees action and religious devotion as one and the same thing. Many of the hymns we use regularly express a point of view which is hopelessly inadequate to the task of being a layman. Judging by the

devotional practices of the laity in some of the mission churches in France, one suspects that the foundation of this approach has already been laid. Here you find people standing to pray with a full consciousness of those around them. Outwardly it gives the impression that devotion is not something to be left in church. They seem to be longing to translate prayer into action in the Body.

This spirituality ought to connect up the daily round in the local neighbourhood or office, the liturgy, and the mission. Laymen should be able to see these three as one whole. They must see the holiness and sacredness of the most ordinary situations of everyday life. And unless they possess this sort of spirituality, it is impossible for them to see what they are really doing in being laymen.

As we have suggested, the self-giving love of Christ's priesthood will be the key to this spirituality. This is what will connect worship and the world. Thus the Parish Communion in which the laity come together to make their weekly offering will be essential.<sup>2</sup> They will be offering back to God the world renewed by the operation of the Holy Spirit in them. God's love for the world and theirs will be marvellously united.

<sup>2</sup> I write here as an Anglican; but I think I am not mistaken in sensing that in other traditions, where very infrequent (but very solemn and intensely corporate) celebrations of the Lord's Supper have been in recent centuries the rule, minds are moving in the same direction.



## 5 *The Resources for the Mission*

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### *The Team*

LET US BEGIN with an overwhelming conclusion which is being reached in many parts of the Church today. First, the witness of the Church in France: 'In our earlier book we advanced many ideas on various subjects, but we can say unhesitatingly that it is the idea of the team which has struck the deepest roots in us and done the most to prove itself'.<sup>1</sup> Second, a witness in the Church of England: 'There is nothing apostolic about leaving a solitary priest in charge of a large urban parish, and it is highly doubtful whether the twentieth century knows any better than the first. . . . Our Lord sent His disciples out two by two.'<sup>2</sup> Third, the witness of a man who has spent his life training young factory workers to be lay missionaries, Canon Cardijn, the founder of the 'Jocists': 'It is not a question of forming individuals, it is a question of forming teams. Apostles cannot be formed singly. That is more true of an apostle than anyone else. An apostle working on his own is a misfit.'<sup>3</sup>

These witnesses can be multiplied indefinitely, and they are sustained by the wide experience of the Methodist circuit. We can no longer afford to ignore them. The *équipe* or team is the cornerstone of the *Mission de France*. In their seminary they are training men from the start in team ministry.

Team work is in fact a good deal more than an efficient way to get the mission of the local church into operation. It is part of the life of the Church. It may be doubted whether we could

<sup>1</sup> *The Missionary Spirit in Parish Life*, G. Michonneau, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> *The Parish in Action*, Joost De Blank, p. 162.

<sup>3</sup> *Challenge to Action*, Joseph Cardijn, p. 52.

expect either clergy or laymen to undertake the type of mission needed without the guidance and support of the Holy Spirit which comes through the experience of the team. The team is like a catalyst which galvanizes missionary desire into missionary action. As the team exists in the midst of the amorphous parish, it begins to crystallize the community life of the parish into a semblance of the Body.

A further reason for the team is that because all men exist in community of some sort, we can only hope to reach them effectively by offering them life in a Christian community. The witnessing power of the small group militantly living the Christian life is enormous. We can think of nothing which would bring a parish to life more quickly than the sight of a group of laymen (or even more, a few of the clergy in the parish) who operated as a team. Surely this is the way to a genuine parish community life. Community life in the church cannot be allowed to dwindle off into vague generalities. It is going to have to be concretely taught. We cannot go on assuming the community is there. Unless someone accepts responsibility for its existence, it is doubtful if anyone will. This is the first task of the team.

### *Team work and the ministry*

The advantages of the team ministry of clergy are beginning to emerge all over the Church. In America the experimental Protestant parishes in Harlem<sup>4</sup>, Cleveland, and Chicago, are the best known departures. In Britain, the Iona Community<sup>5</sup> has developed the possibilities in a larger grouping of parishes in the monthly meetings of the members of the community who minister in Church of Scotland parishes. In terms of this larger grouping of a number of parishes, we must mention the experience of the Servants of Christ the King in the Church of England. Roger Lloyd tells in *An Adventure in Discipleship*

<sup>4</sup> The East Harlem Protestant Parish, 247 E. 104th St., New York, 29.

<sup>5</sup> The Iona Community, 214 Clyde Street, Glasgow, T. Ralph Morton, deputy leader.

how the town of Ipswich formed a 'priest company' and helped many of the Anglican clergy in this town to share their ministry together with far-reaching results. Nor must we forget that the Church seems to learn this lesson again in every age. Methodism was founded on this principle.

Though the evidence in favour of team ministry is clear in terms of the missionary situation, it is equally clear what a very difficult thing this is to achieve practically in the Church today. Though it is difficult enough in countries which have a national church with a parish system, such as England and Scotland, it is next to impossible at present in countries such as the United States which have no national church and operate on a congregational basis. It is easiest, of course, in the Roman Catholic Church which has the tradition of grouping clergy together anyway. In the long run the main barrier to the team ministry is congregationalism in which the congregations work on an individual basis and fail to accept full responsibility for the neighbourhood. If a congregation were willing to admit it had a mission to the neighbourhood, it ought to be willing to take on enough clergy to form a team. These clergy would in turn have a special responsibility to clergy of other churches in the parish, so that the mission becomes a genuine parish effort.

But even taking into account the shortage of clergy, there could be much more opportunity for team ministry if congregations (and clergy!) were willing to give up their 'sovereign rights' and see something more at stake than their own existence. Dr. Joost De Blank gives a plan for team ministry in *The Parish in Action* which seems reasonable and workable. This plan, however, only emphasizes the fact that a genuine parish team can only be begun by a number of congregations *together*. This means that it is difficult to begin without the help of some higher authority than an individual congregation—for example, in the Anglican Church, the bishop.

Any realistic consideration of teams of clergy for Protestant Churches has to take into consideration that the majority of

the clergy are married. Does this preclude team ministry? Certainly it does if we conceive of the team as one which must share the same life. But the essence of team life is not living together, but working together. The team does not have to spend a great deal of time together, but they must feel that the work they do separately is all a part of a common effort. This team work consists in prayer, study, and the mission. Actually as it works out in practice in existing teams, these three areas tend to become one, or perhaps we should say that both prayer and study become missionary. Everything that the team undertakes seems to point towards action.

Team life has two sources of strength which it vitally needs for its existence. First, the long weekly meeting to plan for the congregation during which time both the past and the coming week are reviewed. Here each member of the team is able to make his own witness to the congregation's vocation as he sees it. The vision for the neighbourhood grows out of these meetings. Second, the weekly Parish Communion in which the team relives the mysteries of Christ it communicates to the world. This is the great liturgical meeting with the parish militants and all the rest, which sums up the past week in the offertory and renews the mission in the communion. And through both the inner meaning of the mission is expressed in glorifying God.

Team life is not merely a pooling of resources. To think that it can exist without sacrifices is folly. Above all, the prospective team must count the cost before it launches out into this type of ministry because it is a continuous test of the reality of the Body. The members will find that they have chosen a way of life which only intensifies our need to die to self in order that something better may be born. Team life should teach us what baptism means as nothing else can. On the basis of his rich experience, Michonneau, in *The Missionary Spirit in Parish Life*, lists some of the purging and purifying the team will have to undergo. The personality conflicts which cannot be allowed to stand in the way, the differences over the correct principles to be followed, the doubts over the



parish's reaction to new experiments, the period of indecision. These all test the team's power to survive, yet they are not essentially negative. They may well be the means to providing clergy and ministers with a missionary spirituality such as we have asked for for the laity.

### *Team work and the laity*

It would be a mistake to think of the priest team as a discrete group set over against the congregation and the parish. Michonneau writes, 'A team, moreover, consists not only in a group of priests but soon includes those who, in their own small or big way, regularly or intermittently take part in the parish apostolate. . . . As the priest team keeps doing its work, the lay half of the team takes shape, adheres to it, encircles and grows with it.'<sup>6</sup> The whole purpose of the clergy team is to get others to share in it and thus in the mission. The basic team is the *parish* team made up of militant laymen as well as clergy, each exercising his own form of ministry. We suspect that it is only as the militants are capable of sharing in the team (and thereby perceiving the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the parish) that the mission can really be said to have taken root.

The second resource of the mission is, of course, the team of laymen who form part of the greater parish team with the clergy. It is at the point when the congregation begins to draw on this important resource that a number of things we have spoken about suddenly come into one central focus. In this one resource come together the ministry of the laity in their essential action of offering their 'world' to God, the ministry of the clergy in their missionary role of raising up a militant laity, as well as the whole structure of the mission in its aim to create a church which is at home in its own milieu. The existence of even one small lay team in a neighbourhood should be a great sign. We should not be discouraged if it

<sup>6</sup> *Catholic Action and the Parish*, G. Michonneau and R. Meurice, p. 51.

takes a very long time for this to come into existence. In a sense we would not even want the lay team to come until a very careful groundwork had been laid and the congregation understood what it meant. It would be foolish to try to begin the parish mission with a lay team, for they would have no idea of what was required of them. When the first lay team comes, it is a sign that the structure of the mission has been understood by the laity and that they have had the daring to accept fully their priesthood.

What is this team life for the laity? It is fundamentally an attempt to give the laity the added resources they will need to enter fully into their milieu and exert their leadership. By joining the laity together into a tightly-knit community they can discover corporately what they should do and how they should do it in a way that they never could discover individually. This is just another instance of the fact that the mission of the Church is to the group. It is their business *together*.

The lay team, like the clergy team, must meet together at least once a week to wait on God, to pray, to review their effectiveness and plan what common task they will take on in the week to come. The membership of the team must share as much in common as possible. They must live in the same 'world', either in their work or in their neighbourhood. This must be because their task is to plan a common action in which they can all participate within this given 'world'. The words of Christ, 'blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it,'<sup>7</sup> forever ring in their ears. Their meat and drink is the everyday life of the world and God's will for that life. When they meet, they come to compare their observations of the society in which they live and to judge it by the standards of the Gospel. We have it summed up in the words of the Catholic Action movement to which all teams in the future will owe a debt, 'observe, judge, act'. Thus it is evident how important the Bible and the word of God are to the team. All action springs from the word of God to the group.

The intent of this action is to work on some problem in

<sup>7</sup> Luke 11.28.

the neighbourhood from inside the environment as an actual member of the particular neighbourhood. To give a very homely example, Abbé Godin tells of one of his teams made up of young men. These men decided that one of the problems of their 'world' was the discouragement of the unattractive girls who were never asked to dance at the Saturday night dances. They decided they ought to start dancing with them and talking with them. When the men did, their friends began to do the same, and the girls concluded the world hadn't treated them so badly after all! Though this is a simple incident, it has all the marks on it of an authentic team action. It is corporate; it shows the concrete way in which the Gospel is understood; it is something which could only be usefully done by people who were part of that particular milieu; and it changes the milieu.

The principal danger in team work is that without realizing it the team might become a pressure group in the neighbourhood. As soon as this happens, the purpose of team work is defeated. The crucial issue is the ability to wait patiently on God and decide what course He is calling the group to take. In this we have much to learn from the *Servants of Christ the King* who never take any action until there is a unanimous group decision. And they spend a great deal of time in the waiting.

### *The celibate community*

After seeing some of the imaginative ways in which lay ministry is being developed today, we believe there is a need to give laymen opportunity for some sort of radical sacrifice or self-offering. There ought to be much more challenge to the layman than we offer today. One of the points at which we are failing is in our dealings with people who out of choice or circumstances are unmarried. We should be showing unmarried people the scope of offering which is open to them in Christian celibacy. T. S. Eliot has rightly said that there ought to be more vocations to marriage today and more to



celibacy. The positive side of celibacy when one is a Christian must become much clearer to the Church. In the wide sense all Christian life is a life of marriage, for the Christian insight is that we are not meant by God to remain alone. We are all destined for a life of deep community. Perhaps marriage and the family will in the providence of God provide this means of grace and holiness. But what of those who are not married? There must be a genuine life of community for them as well. We suggest that there may be people in the congregation who would like to join in the experiment of a communal life in groups of three or four while remaining exactly where they are in the world. This sort of vocation is steadily growing today. The *Petits Frères* and *Petites Soeurs* of Charles de Foucauld<sup>8</sup> have had the most experience with it, though it has been developed by the Protestant community of Taizé as well. This community sends out small groups to work in cities and live the Christian life together. In both these cases this way of life is undertaken by people who have binding vows for life, but we see no reason why it could not be tried experimentally for shorter periods in the local church. A small number of either men or women take a flat together in the corner of the neighbourhood least touched by the church. This flat becomes in fact a sort of 'mission station' for the church in the area. Though in no sense is it identified as belonging to the church, it is a place where the neighbourhood knows it will always receive a welcome. Gradually it becomes a definite part of the neighbourhood, as the lay team learns how to be at home in the neighbourhood. To a certain extent this sort of thing has its roots in the 'settlements' of the slums in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of which Oxford House in London is an example. What we have in mind, however, is on a much smaller scale and more 'hidden' in the surrounding community.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See *Seeds of the Desert*, R. Voillaume.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. also J. H. Oldham: *Florence Allshorn and the Story of St. Julian's* (SCM Press 1951) and *The Notebooks of Florence Allshorn* (SCM Press 1957).



This suggestion is put forth in all seriousness, though it is evident what a long way off its reality is for most of the Church today. Yet even if laymen are not ready for it, it is at least something at which we should aim. The Church has a responsibility to provide a communal way of life for the unmarried, and the unmarried have a responsibility to make the full gift of their unmarried state to God. These two facts must find concrete expression somewhere.

### *The Family 'church'*

There seems to be a general awakening today to the importance of family life in the Church. Particularly with the growth of the suburban church, nearly every Protestant Church in the United States has begun a campaign to encourage the family to worship together in church. We wonder, however, if the possibilities of the family in the neighbourhood have been developed. Have we seen the family as the basic Christian group of the community?

Being in itself a ready-made community, the family is ideally suited for the mission. The ability of the family to reach the milieu in which it lives and to deepen the community life of the neighbourhood at the same time is so clear that we suspect this is the obvious place to begin the mission. Moreover, people today are eager to have help in strengthening family life. In the United States, this is a popular subject. The crucial point will be to get the family to see its vocation to community service and the proclamation of the Gospel. Too often our conception of family life has been on the basis of the family's needs rather than the needs of others.

The ministry of the laity as applied to the family provides some wonderfully fertile ground for this key concept. St. Augustine tells us that the father should be to his family what the bishop is to his diocese. It is the duty of the father to build up a priestly community in his family. In this light it is the liturgical principle of communal offering to God which is the unifying principle of the family. We get the best example

of this priesthood in the family's relations with neighbours. The Christian home literally gives itself away to its neighbours. It is constantly at work to make itself a centre of concern and friendship for the neighbourhood. This means that a certain amount of privacy is going to have to go, just as it has to go in the family life of the minister, and just as it has to go when celibate Christian communities are formed in the neighbourhood. But is the family going to be any worse off for what they have to give up? They will surely gain much more than they lose.

The presence of children in the family only heightens the ability of the family to be a part of the neighbourhood. Their natural unselfconsciousness and friendliness make them often much more effective apostles than their parents.

The 'House Church' is something which has been uncovered by both the church in Halton and parishes connected with the Iona Community. This family church which we have been describing is in some ways merely an intensified expression of the same thing. Ralph Morton, the deputy leader of the community, describes what Iona means by the 'House Church' in *The Iona Community Story*. 'What happens in the parishes in which such experiments are being made is that the parish is divided up into small areas—streets or elders' districts. Every member of the congregation is a member of a group. The groups have regular meetings every three or four weeks. The meeting is led by a layman though a minister may be present. The leader conducts Bible study and the worship with which the meeting closes. But the gathering is not primarily for Bible study. It is the Church in that street meeting for the purposes of the Church. It drinks tea, it discusses the needs of the people in the area, not only of the church people but of everyone, and it undertakes to carry out the particular work of the church in that area—and it reads the Bible and prays.'<sup>10</sup>

This conception of the Church at the grass roots level of the street is something which is growing progressively more

<sup>10</sup> *The Iona Community Story*, T. R. Morton, pp. 72-73.

important. Not only have Iona and Halton discovered it. Michonneau and Joost De Blank both emphasize it in their books written out of their experience. Tom Allan, in his Glasgow parish, found its relevance. This approach is tremendously valuable and we will have more to say of it, but it takes a long time to develop the community of this 'House Church' to a point where it is effective in reaching the neighbourhood. The family on the other hand is ready to forge ahead and could be a great resource to the 'House Church' as it develops its community on a street to street basis. If marriage is understood aright, it is pre-eminently a sacrament of society. It is an apostolic means of grace for the building up of society. Families exist to glorify God through their mutual love, but they exist also for the sake of the world. The Church today must show families how they can best fulfil their social role. We must make them above all apostles to their neighbourhood.

### *The Parish Meeting*

There is a resource which may be useful to the local church, particularly in the early stages of the mission or from time to time as the parish reaches certain turning points in its Christian life together. This resource is a general meeting of the local church in order (in the words of Alan Ecclestone) that 'it may realize and work out its essential life together'.<sup>11</sup> This is the 'Parish Meeting'. In this meeting which is an open meeting in the best sense, things which are of importance to all aspects of the parish can be discussed publically, from politics to changes in congregational worship. There is every reason why Methodists and Congregationalists should be a great resource to the entire church on this score, for the Methodist Society Meeting and the Congregational Church Meeting have much in common with what is intended by the parish meeting, and much more experience in its conduct.

One of the principal values of this resource is that it helps

<sup>11</sup> *The Parish Meeting at Work*, Alan Ecclestone.

the neighbourhood, and most particularly the congregation, to get a picture of itself in the midst of all the cross-currents of parish life. After we have begun and perhaps the parish survey has been made, there will be a need for a general discussion to test opinion and to see what questions have been raised. There will be a need to 'sort things out' in terms of the whole parish framework. The parish meeting should perform the function of crystallizing opinion. The vicar of Halton says that in his parish the 'House Church' would never have come into being without the parish meeting.<sup>12</sup>

The parish meeting is certainly a venture of faith for the average congregation to undertake because it may raise all sorts of perplexing questions which have never been explicitly faced in the parish. Yet is this not just what we are asking for in the mission of the local church? Unless we are willing to face the challenge of not knowing where we are being led, are we really in a state of mission? In any event the parish meeting puts the emphasis just where it belongs—on the community of laymen and clergy who *together* bear the responsibility for the witness of the parish. Looking at this resource in this light, perhaps a better title for the parish meeting is one used by a church in the suburbs of London who calls it the 'Family Circle'. This title would indicate that what is intended is a parish-wide 'House Church'. It is a place where the family of the church can meet to deliberate their vocation, just as they meet weekly to renew their vocation in the liturgy. The only danger is that we narrow our scope to include only matters which relate specifically to the congregation.

### *Direct and indirect mission*

Our great need today is to release the leadership of the Church so that the Gospel can be heard. We use the word, release, because we believe that it is already there. It only needs to be stirred up and set free. This leadership is the priesthood which was given to us by Christ. It must be released from

<sup>12</sup> *The Parish Comes Alive*, E. W. Southcott, p. 55.



the confines of the church building in which we have enclosed it.

There is such a lot to be done in the average congregation today that it is quite possible to be fully occupied with a valuable and Christian ministry without ever thinking of the ninety and nine who are *outside* the fold. In order to begin the mission we will have to look to our priorities and stop doing some of the things we are doing. We will have to prune down our domestic chores; and to our surprise we may find that the life of the congregation goes on quite well without them being done!

For the priesthood of the church to come more fully into play, we will have to do two things. First, we will need to spend more time thinking about and planning for the local church, questioning what we are doing, and trying to find a way of life which is truly expressive of the meaning of the Gospel to the neighbourhood. This evolution of a way of life and the living of it might be called the 'indirect mission'. The ability of the church to enter into the neighbourhood more fully is part of this. Second, we need to spend more time in out-and-out talking about the Gospel, preaching it at the House Church and baptism interviews, etc. The leadership of the church has not reached its fulness until there is a small group of laymen who quite naturally can talk about their faith. This second aspect might be called the 'direct mission'. Both kinds of leadership are needed. In both we must not be guilty of placing parochial limitations to our goal. We need a revival of the great insight of Wesley: 'I look upon the whole world as my parish.' The mission is not limited to the congregation, because there are the others in the parish; nor to the area of the parish, because there is the town; nor to the town, because there is the nation and the world. We can exclude no one who is in our field of vision—streets, neighbourhoods, offices, factories. As Christians we see the world under two aspects simultaneously. We see it as it is with all its lesser allegiances, its drifting, its mediocrity, its unfulfilled potential. And we see at the same time that the Kingdom has come and is coming.

We see that it is coming even now to every person who allows himself to be won with love. And in this moment we realize that we are apostles. We are the sent. This is our vocation—to be priests to the world. We are those called to bring the world to perfection by means of our offering. We are here to glorify the Father through the Son by the Holy Ghost.

## 6 *A Critique of Anglican Liturgical Life*

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THE CHURCH is discovering gradually a more expressive way of life. It is a mission to society. The thought of the Curé d'Ars that 'the world belongs to him that loves it most and shows that love' is beginning to have fresh relevance. Christians are beginning to *be* that supernatural leaven of society through their love for their world. Yet the Church is discovering too that the more fully it accepts its missionary role, the more deeply it needs the means of grace available to us through worship. The pattern of life which has emerged is a missionary pattern, yet it is also a liturgical pattern. In a real sense the relevance of liturgy has been born anew in this common search for a more deeply Christian way of life.

The re-evaluation of liturgy which is going on is more than a realization of the importance of worship. It is a realization of how inextricably bound up in one another liturgy and mission are. We are beginning to see how our union with the offering of Christ in the liturgy goes on uninterruptedly in the world, and how the love which compels us to offer ourselves to the world is the same offering as the liturgy's. It is the oneness of Christ's priesthood in us which forges these two actions into one.

Our task now is to show how the Church can participate more fully in the sacraments and how they can become the life-giving centres of human existence. Actually there is a double problem in suggesting a new liturgical pattern for the Church. Not only do we need to find a way of expressing the relationship of sacraments to society and the mission, we also need to revise our thinking about what the sacraments mean

themselves. One of the great contributions of the Liturgical Movement is that it has shown us new meanings in the sacraments—meanings which belonged to the early Church, but which were obscured during the Middle Ages. We believe it is essential for the concerned laity in each congregation to do its own thinking about what the sacraments are saying about life in the Church and particularly about the congregation's life together. Each congregation needs its own 'liturgical theology' based on its own needs. Is not this just as important as our planning a strategy for the mission? We ought to have some clear ideas about exactly what the sacraments say and do. Unless we have taken this step, the meaning of the mission itself may become confused.

Before we move on to this fresh approach to worship which the Liturgical Movement has expressed, it might be helpful to look critically at the present state of worship in one Church. I am an Anglican, and it is the Anglican worship that I know and love, and for that very reason want to see more adequate, that I must write of. How far men and women of other traditions will feel that Anglican criticisms of Anglican worship suggest comparable criticisms of their own tradition of worship, it is not for me to say. It is clear to me, however, that much that Anglicans have to say nowadays in criticism of their liturgical tradition is in part at least the result of heeding criticisms from non-Anglicans, both 'Catholic' and 'Protestant'. In this ecumenical age, none of us can any longer live to himself.

We should emphasize the fact that we are being deliberately critical about what we find. Surely there is a need today for an out-and-out criticism of the Church's worship. It has not questioned its value nearly enough. Even though it may be quite impossible practically to make all the changes we may come to desire at once, we ought to be critical as well as appreciative of what we have.

Within the last few years there has been a revived interest in what Cranmer intended by the Prayer Book pattern of worship. This may be due to an effort to disentangle the



Church from the liturgical muddle in which we are today. The Parish Communion, of which we will speak shortly, has somewhat changed the picture; but on the whole, the Anglican Church has never achieved the balance of word and sacrament which Cranmer intended. The central service of Sunday was undoubtedly meant to be the Holy Communion, yet only in the surrounding framework of Morning and Evening Prayer, with its emphasis on the reading of the word of God. The corporate intercession of the people in the litany was part of this weekly pattern as well. Within this pattern one gets a balanced diet liturgically. Word and sacrament fall into their correct proportions in the balance between the offices and the Holy Communion, and within the Holy Communion in the balance between the word in the sermon and the sacrament. There was also an intention to see and be near what happens in the service. G. W. O. Addleshaw has summed it up well when he says, 'The process by which medieval churches were adapted for Prayer Book worship might be summed up as one of taking the communicants into the chancel for the Eucharist, so that they can be within sight and hearing of the priest at the altar; and of bringing down the priest into the nave so that he could be amongst his people for Morning and Evening Prayer.'<sup>1</sup> Though this desire to see and hear perhaps owed more to the Middle Ages than Cranmer suspected, he used it to develop the aspect of the gathered community in the Church's worship. His intention was to restore frequent communion to the Church of England, and at the same time the reality of the family of God.

The liturgical confusion in the Church today must be judged against the background of what the Prayer Book so patently intends. In most churches today the balance has been radically shifted. For churches without the Parish Communion, the climax of Sunday is either 'High Mattins' or 'High Mass'. Either one of these alternatives would seem to put the emphasis in another place than Cranmer intended. In the first

<sup>1</sup> *The Architectural Setting of Anglican Worship*, G. W. O. Addleshaw, p. 45.

alternative a service of the word—an office with strong stress on the Bible lessons—is dressed up with a florid choral setting and a sermon into something which bears little resemblance to the Prayer Book pattern. But regardless of whether it fulfils Cranmer's intent, has the service any merit in itself? In the Episcopal Church in America, one hears often the complaint from those who have not been brought up in this Church that the 'Episcopal service' is difficult and confusing to follow. We presume that these people are for the most part speaking of this 'High Mattins' which, with its counterpart of Evensong in the Church of England, has become such a part of the life of the Church. Neither Morning nor Evening Prayer were designed to be 'the Sunday service', nor were they intended to be for the uninitiated. They are *daily* offices for the instructed church. Taking them out of this context, we have tried to convert them into something they were never intended to be with the result that they may confuse and bore nearly as many people as they edify. The congregation of today needs a form of worship which is a good deal more communicative of the Gospel than 'High Mattins'.

Perhaps the main difficulty we see with this service is that one of its primary objectives—the emphasis on the word of God to the people of God focused here in the congregation—is mostly lost because the service presupposes the existence of this community in the congregation. There is little consciousness among the majority of laity today that they are the people of God, grounded in the Bible and God's mighty acts. Therefore, the offices can make little sense. They are 'advanced' services for those who have become the Christian community. The community has to be formed by the mission and led to the 'incorporating activity' of the Holy Communion before they are ready for the offices.

In many ways we like what has been done with the offices at Halton. Here there is 'House Evensong'—Evensong conducted in the homes of the parish by laymen for the benefit of the faithful. There is no attempt to make a great service out of either Mattins or Evensong. Mattins has been placed

within the Parish Communion and Evensong becomes a 'small' service. Halton has certainly begun to restore the correct proportions of the Prayer Book.

The alternative pattern of Anglican worship is to find the climax of Sunday in 'High Mass'. By 'High Mass' we mean a service which expresses the concerns of the first Liturgical Movement—a desire to recapture the fulness of catholic ceremonial. Here, in 'Anglo-Catholic' churches, we find a trained choir singing the traditional parts of the Communion service assigned to the *schola cantorum* and the people for the most part not receiving communion.

Though this alternative places the central emphasis on the Holy Communion (disregarding for the moment the fact that the people are not communicating) it is as basically irrelevant to the condition of the Church today as its 'Low Church' counterpart. In both alternatives we find little understanding of the role of the laity and a resulting passivity on their part. These services with their trained choirs would go on quite as well if the people never came at all!

There are two other elements in the present pattern of parish worship—the 'Parish Communion' and the 'early service'. In some parishes, the parish communion is the climax of Sunday worship and in others it exists alongside other services. The Parish Communion represents an attempt (going on now some 25 years) to emphasize the Eucharist as the corporate offering of the parish's people. In many ways it attempts to restore the correct liturgical balance of the Prayer Book. It tries to intergrate the parish around this central act; it stresses the participation of the laity. Yet we would like to criticize even this step in the right direction. We believe that the full meaning of the Parish Communion has not been fully drawn out. Many parishes seem to have adopted it with only a very shallow understanding of its meaning. To some it is a means of 'pepping up' congregational worship. They fail to see what its implications are for the life of the congregation and neighbourhood. Many parishes introduced an offertory procession of laymen presenting the bread and wine at the altar without



realizing that this meant the people must learn how to offer themselves to God in the mission. No wonder, as Canon K. M. Carey points out in the October 1956 *Westcott House Chronicle*, there is dissatisfaction over what is happening to the Parish Communion in some parishes. Canon Carey suggests that there may be a theological weakness due to an over-emphasis on fellowship and offering and an insufficient stress on our Lord's one final sacrifice. This opinion was expressed as well by the Archbishop of York in the essay on the Parish Communion in *Durham Essays and Addresses*.<sup>2</sup> Evidently the time has come for a reconsideration of this service.

To restore the correct emphasis there must not be a drawing away from either fellowship or offering, but there must be a deepening of these through the missionary experience of the Church. We must push the meaning of life in the Body of Christ even further than many congregations have, and we can only do this by trying to *be* the Body together. As we experience life in the fellowship of the Church and begin to plumb the depths of this fellowship, we realize acutely the limitations of human fellowship in the Body. Even though we mediate God's love to each other, life together in the Church teaches us that ultimately human beings cannot perfectly meet each other's needs and that we must face God alone. And the human fellowship must not hide from us the ultimate necessity of doing this. Thus we can only know our real aloneness with God inasmuch as we are a human fellowship.

On the side of offering in the Parish Communion, we must gain the deeper insight that it is not so much our own offering as it is Christ's in us. As we try genuinely to offer, we learn that His is the only perfect offering. Offering pushed to its logical conclusion should make the emphasis on our Lord even clearer. It is precisely the Parish Communion which should teach us the inadequacy of Pelagianism. Yet this is something which the congregation can discover only by living the theology of the Parish Communion. As long as

<sup>2</sup> S.P.C.K., 1957.



the parish communion remains untranslated into missionary action, its theology will remain superficial and inadequate. And this service by its nature demands action in a special way.

The problem of the 'early service' with its individualistic worshippers scattered all over the church is well known.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps this part of our contemporary pattern of worship has been excessively condemned. Certainly every service in the church does not have to be a gathering of the entire congregation. There is definite place for the 'small service', as indeed the experiments with the House Church at Halton have shown. It is not the size, the time, or the quiet of the service which should disturb us, but rather what the service is conveying about the Christian faith. Is the service saying that religious faith is something which can be cut off from the total life of the parish? If it is, then obviously it is misleading the worshippers. Yet it need not. When the family worships at home, or when the House Church worships, this is not the case. In fact such services tend to intensify the communal side of liturgy simply because of their intimacy. Later we will show what some of the possibilities are in turning the 'small service' into something which is proclaiming the Gospel. But looking at the 'early service' objectively as an outsider, it seems that it is as little expressive of Christian life as most of the rest of the present pattern.

What emerges out of this very sketchy critique of Anglican worship is that in the name of the Gospel, we must put an end to party labels. The missionary conditions under which the Church must live today show us the irrelevance of an exclusive allegiance to either emphasis of the Church—Protestant or Catholic. When one is faced with the problem of masses of people who are apathetic to religion, the usual pattern of life in the Church, whether Evangelical or Anglo-Catholic, is of little avail. The whole problem will have to

<sup>3</sup> Are not thoughtful Free Churchmen almost scandalized by the obviously *un-congregational* character of the Communion services in many Anglican churches?

be reconsidered in terms of what we are trying to communicate and how we are to communicate it. One of the main troubles we find with worship today is that it is so misleading. It is too often communicating Evangelicalism or Anglo-Catholicism or Romanism or Presbyterianism instead of the authentic notes of the Gospel.

In the Liturgical Movement in France there is a word which is very expressive of what they are trying to do there in terms of their own peculiar problems. This word is *vérité*. As applied to the liturgy, the word means trueness or honesty in the way the outward celebration expresses the inner meaning of the liturgy. If the liturgy calls for a prayer, then it must be a true prayer to which the people can honestly answer 'Amen' and not something mumbled by the priest in a language the people cannot understand.

Naturally this word and its importance come from a different background from our own. Through the Reformation we have many of the things which the continental Liturgical Movement is asking for in the name of *vérité*—the vernacular, lay participation, etc. Yet this need for *vérité* is something which is not unremoved from our own situation. The Anglican Church has so many of the insights of the Liturgical Movement already, yet we fail to realize we have this treasure. Our problem is to help our Communion appreciate what we have, especially as regards the Eucharist.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps this sense of *vérité* throws our whole problem into relief. We should be constantly concerned about the inner meaning of the liturgy and asking ourselves if it is being understood by the congregation. Once more we return to this business of communication which seems to be so essential. The sacraments should become startlingly relevant to the con-

<sup>4</sup> Reference may be made to *An Experimental Liturgy* by J. G. Davies, G. Cope, and D. A. Tytler (Lutterworth, 1958), an attempt to provide a liturgy for the Eucharist which expresses the modern understanding of the Eucharist, but is not too far removed from the traditions we know. The authors are Anglican clergy who worked closely with a larger group which included several Free Church ministers.

gregation due to the trueness and honesty with which they are celebrated. We must seek to disentangle the confusion and inconsistency of our present pattern of worship. There needs to be a policy about worship, a self-understanding. In every parish there is a need for a parish Liturgical Movement.

## **7 Towards a Parish Liturgical Strategy**

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WE COME NOW to the crucial task of trying to state clearly what the local church ought to be emphasizing for a full liturgical life. We have said before that the congregation must think through the meaning of the liturgy for itself and come to some common agreement about what the liturgy is saying. We must see the sacraments as clues to the meaning of our life in the Church. Every church ought to have a 'liturgical strategy' just as it has a missionary strategy, so that the mission takes on a deeper and deeper meaning in terms of the liturgy.

In order to have a parish liturgical strategy, a small group within the congregation will need some basic knowledge about the nature of the liturgy and the relevance of worship to their life together. This is the first step.

In spite of the danger of superficiality, we want to try to present here compactly four of the most important meanings of the liturgy which the Liturgical Movement has uncovered. These meanings seem to us to be the indispensable background to any sort of liturgical creativity in the congregation. Both clergy and people must be aware that they are participating together in these basic common meanings.

### *Action in the Liturgy*

There is a quotation from St. Leo: 'That which was visible in our Redeemer has now passed over into the sacraments.' Perhaps this statement has to be carefully qualified, but at least it expresses forcefully one side of an important truth.



What St. Leo meant was that the sacraments have to be seen as activities of Christ. This idea of action in the liturgy is of basic importance. We have shown before how the word means something which is done for the sake of the community (an action, a deed, an event, an objective act). When Christians worship, something happens, for Christian worship is sacramental. Christ is the actor in our worship.

This basic level has to be pressed in the Church today. It is not at all obvious that something does happen in our worship, judging by the participation of the congregation. It may well be that our worship is unconvincing to the outsider just because this essential meaning is obscured. Because the early Church saw worship as action, it played the central part in their lives. Indeed, it was the constituting fact of being a Christian. Massey Shepherd in *The Worship of the Church* quotes from the Latin Acts of St. Saturninus and his companions a trial which was held in Carthage in A.D. 304. The accusation was that some Christians were charged with treason for holding eucharistic assemblies. The accused says in his defence, 'Don't you know that a Christian is constituted by the Eucharist and the Eucharist by a Christian? Neither avails without the other. We celebrated our assembly right gloriously. We always convene at the Eucharist for the reading of the Lord's scriptures.'<sup>1</sup>

This action of Christ in the worship of the Church can best be understood by examining the two principal distortions of it in the history of the Western Church. On the one hand there has been a tendency to see this action as that of the earthly priest at the earthly altar. The priest becomes in the extreme statement of this the miracle worker who is able to perform the miracle of transubstantiation. The other distortion is the Protestant reaction to this view which in its extreme form sees eucharistic worship as a human psychological memorial of the Last Supper. It is interesting to note how much either view emphasizes the manward side of worship. The service becomes much more something which we do

<sup>1</sup> *The Worship of the Church*, Massey H. Shepherd, p. 4.

than something that God does. We have quite lost sight of the conception of God's action as being the only true action.

In the parish liturgical strategy, we must find ways to make it clear that the important thing is not what the minister is doing at the earthly altar but rather what Christ is doing at the heavenly altar. This is a much more exalted concept to grasp—of a door in heaven opening up to us—yet it is the normative one of our faith.

Naturally there is a manward side to the action of the liturgy, and indeed it is by what we do that the true action of Christ is made comprehensible to us. By our action of offering and thanksgiving we are able to receive Christ's. The essential part is to understand the relation between these two. We can perform no action which is not dependent on the mystery of Christ in us. This mystery of Christ in us is our ability to offer and to pray. We only have these two gifts inasmuch as the Spirit calls us to offer and to pray. They are not qualities which belong to us, so to speak. They are the gifts of God, and they are given most especially through baptism. The more we are 'in Christ', the more we are able to offer and to pray. We believe that as congregations grow in this ability to act liturgically, that is to offer and to pray, they will realize the truth of the real relationship between our offering and prayer and our Lord's. The action of Christ in the liturgy will become much more of a reality to them.

The crucial question is, of course, how this fundamental idea of the action of Christ in the liturgy is capable of being conveyed either quickly or easily to the ordinary church member. Perhaps the place to begin teaching liturgical action is by drawing out the meaning in day to day situations of this action of prayer and offering. Yet in some ways this is an unsatisfactory place to begin because the action of the congregation has importance only as it is taken up in the offering of Christ to the Father. The principal criticism the Liturgical Movement has received recently has been on this very point: it is accused of over-emphasizing the offering of the people. Yet we find in experience that this is the inevitable place to

begin. We cannot let the matter rest here, but we must begin with people where they are.

We wonder how many people attend church week by week with the main purpose of presenting themselves to God a 'reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice'. Though this is doubtless only one reason for attending church, we wonder if it is not an *essential* one. To come to worship with this purpose is to come to *do* something—the highest of which we are capable. To come to church for this reason is strictly speaking not to come to 'attend' church. 'Attend' has certain passive connotations which well characterize much of the church's worship today. Perhaps the best place to begin our re-orientation is to make this distinction between attending and doing.

If it is only a question of being a passive attender, what compelling reason is there for coming to church? Yet if it is a question of doing something which you and you alone can do, it is a different matter altogether. We must begin to teach the laity what it means to lay before God week by week all that He has given and all that He has taken away. As the representatives of the people come forward to the Holy Table bearing the gifts of bread and wine, we must help the congregation to make the connection between these gifts and the gift of themselves to their neighbours and to each other. Ultimately we must make the connection between the bread and wine and the entire Godward surge of our lives—every link forged between God and ourselves through trial and failure, sin and repentance as well as our victories.

One of the main problems in our understanding of liturgical action in the Church today is, as we have suggested, an over-emphasis on the role of the priest or minister and not enough on God. The place of the clergyman in worship today is no longer that of the *president* of the liturgical assembly as in the early Church.<sup>2</sup> In both the Roman Catholic and the

<sup>2</sup> At this point, as in some others, those of us who come from churches with a strong professional ministry, whether of the 'Catholic' or 'Protestant' tradition, have something to learn from the weekly assemblies for the Breaking of Bread of the 'Plymouth Brethren'.



Protestant Churches, the clergyman alone is the principal focus. The role of the liturgical assembly in worship has largely disappeared. We have been trying to indicate a way back, so that the laity can assume their rightful role. It must be a way which places the principal stress on God and not on us. The answer to this dilemma is, we believe, a return to a more comprehensive understanding of the priesthood as something spread throughout the whole liturgy and not concentrated in the celebrant saying the Prayer of Consecration. If the laity could see that it is the lifting up of their hearts to God in thanksgiving which is the cornerstone of the Consecration Prayer, then perhaps the true proportions of Christ, minister, and laity would begin to come clear. When the laity begin to realize that they are in part at least 'co-consecrators' with the priest, they will be more ready to see Christ is the only true consecrator at the liturgy.

### *The Level of Offertory*

One of the principal outward and visible changes which the Liturgical Movement has made in the manner in which we celebrate the liturgy is the offertory procession—the laity presenting the gifts of bread and wine to the priest in the Holy Communion service. The significance of the bread and wine has needed underlining. They provide one of the richest pieces of symbolism in the entire Church. We can easily see why there has been such a stress on the offertory procession. In this one symbol we have summed up the true meaning of liturgical action—the correct proportions between our action and Christ's. In the bread and the wine, both God and ourselves are symbolized, and the difference between them is marvellously clear. The danger, of course, is that the ceremony may be adopted because 'people like it' ignoring its meaning.

We present the bread and the wine in the offertory as symbols of our life—creation which we have been given and misused, our industry in the creation of bread from the fruits of the earth (symbol also of our daily food and nourishment



given us by God). And Christ gives us in return the perfection of this life which, when we offered it a moment before, was so pitiful and inadequate. Here in this change from bread and wine to Body and Blood, we see that the offertory was only a preparation for the offering, which is Christ. In the words of Dom Capelle, 'In assisting at Mass the primary object is not to give oneself to God; it is to offer Christ and to receive from Him His redemption.'<sup>3</sup>

The symbolism of the offertory procession does not, of course, end in the symbols of the bread and wine themselves. It is a *procession* as well. In this outward and visible action of the laity presenting the gifts, the necessity for the inner and spiritual action is made evident. The fact that the liturgy contains an offertory procession and that two laymen carry the bread and wine to the altar means very little outwardly. It is certainly no guarantee of lay participation in the Eucharist. It is the *symbolism* of this outward action which we must press. The visible action of the procession must be a symbol of the real action of the people outside the Eucharist, acting as the agents of Christ's love in the world.

There must be some sort of genuine connection between the symbol and the inner reality which it signifies. In this case there must be a real missionary effort in the local church for the offertory procession to have any significance. We believe that the more the liturgy is communicating in terms of its symbols, the more we are able to participate, and the more we are able to receive the grace of God in the liturgy. Yet we would be very chary of introducing new symbolism into worship for fear of the symbols becoming empty shells and losing their power. A congregation should even be slow in introducing something as familiar as the offertory procession until a group within the congregation has begun to understand its apostolic task.

One of the most exciting parts of a parish Liturgical Movement ought to be the realization of the connection between

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Gerard Philips in *The Role of the Laity in the Church*, p. 59.

the mission and the bread and wine. It is here that we begin to understand the whole goal of the offertory. Cardinal Suhard writing to his diocese said, 'And so, when you approach the altar, never come alone, dear brethren. You have the power and the mission to save along with yourself, your household, your street, your town, and the whole of civilization.'<sup>4</sup> We must begin to see that a great deal more is involved in the offertory than just our own lives. Everything and every person that our lives touch are part of the offertory as well. It takes a great deal of time and a great deal of sacrifice to make a true offering of your world to God. You have to be present and engage in your world before you can offer it. Yet offer it we must. We cannot stand back from offering every area of the world with which our lives come in contact—our office, our friends, our clubs, our neighbours—any more than we can stand back from offering them the love of Christ from day to day. Both the offering in the liturgy and the offering in our living spring from the same thing—the command of Christ to go into all the world to preach the Gospel. Both are a means for bringing society to that perfection for which Christ died.

The one thing which the offertory must express above all else is our love for the world as well as, of course, our love for each other. If this will to love is dead, the liturgy makes little sense. It is unfortunate that we have lost the meaning behind the Kiss of Peace with which the early Christians greeted each other at this place. Significantly the new liturgy of the Church of South India<sup>5</sup> has tried to reinstate this rich symbolism with the passing of a hand clasp. We must find ways to express this love which underlies the offertory, as has the Church of South India. When we try to look objectively at the impression which the Holy Communion might make on a person who had never seen the service before, it is questionable if he would ever guess that the people came out of a constraining love for God and man. Perhaps this is

<sup>4</sup> *The Church Today*, E. Suhard, p. 308.

<sup>5</sup> Published by the Oxford University Press, Madras. See also T. S. Garrett: *Worship in the Church of South India* (Lutterworth, 1958).

basically a pastoral problem because if the congregation is a genuine community who care about each other, then this love is bound to be communicated in the tone of the responses and the extent of participation.

We must find ways to express the fact that in this bread and wine which the Church offers together every time the Eucharist is celebrated, the congregation has symbolically put all its goods together in charity. When we offer the elements, it is a sort of re-enactment of that glorious period after Pentecost when the Church began to live a common life because they needed to find a way to express the overwhelming experience of Christ's love in their hearts. Though the Church no longer practices this sharing of material goods, the liturgy teaches us that our goods belong to God and to each other more really than they belong to ourselves. The Prayer Book offertory sentence, 'Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in Him?'<sup>6</sup> sets the tone for the deepest meaning of offertory. Or in the picturesque language of Irenaeus, 'That poor widow the Church casts her whole life into the treasury of God.'

It is precisely some of these more radical implications of the liturgy which need to be revived within the Church. It is the extent to which Christians are willing to go in order to love which alone will convince the world of our faith. The clergy and laity together must begin to uncover in the local church the astounding depth of offertory which the liturgy implies. As Dom Gregory Dix reminds us, in primitive terminology those whom we call 'the communicants' are always called 'the offerers'.<sup>7</sup>

### *The Liturgy as a Meal*

Another change which the Liturgical Movement has made in the manner of celebrating the liturgy is a return to the west-

<sup>6</sup> I John 3.17.

<sup>7</sup> *The Shape of the Liturgy*, Dom Gregory Dix, p. 436.



ward position of the celebrant.<sup>8</sup> We now find the priest facing the people across a table altar, placed much nearer the people. He assumes the role of one presiding at a meal.

The Reformation, and Calvin in particular, stressed the Holy Communion as a meal, yet we need to regain this emphasis once more in the local church. We must see this as a meal, yet not alone a commemoration of the Last Supper. We must see it against the background of the Jewish Passover, a foretaste of the great Messianic Banquet of the Kingdom—the eschatological feast with the Messiah and His disciples at the end of time. The Liturgical Movement has shown us that this background is so essential there is a need to reconsider the liturgy from this aspect. Its application to the local church is particularly pointed. Here we have obviously the heavenly family meal of the family of God. Could there be a better summary of what we mean by the corporate nature of parish life?

Without losing the reverence which is due to the sacrament of Christ's eternal presence among us, surely we should learn how to see the connection between our participation in the Eucharist and our participation at a family dinner. In a real sense, is not every family dinner a 'little eucharist' when the community gathers to receive and give thanks for its daily bread from God? The family blessing by the head of the household should technically be, of course, a thanksgiving, for this is the way the Jews blessed things—by giving thanks to God. Perhaps this type of blessing should be encouraged in the congregation in order to help to establish the connection between Eucharist and family meal. In any event we need to see the Prayer of Consecration as the response of Christ to the thanksgiving of the people of God gathered at the 'family table' of the church.

This aspect becomes even more important when we realize that until after the end of the second century the Eucharist was celebrated in homes. Domestic surroundings must have

<sup>8</sup> The Reformed traditions have of course always used the westward position.



had a profound influence on the point of view from which the early Church saw this sacrament. It was a long time before the church became accustomed to seeing the liturgy in the specifically 'religious' setting of a church building.

The Church today must do some rethinking of what we want to convey in restoring the liturgy to a more domestic framework. Surely this is vitally important in terms of communicating the Gospel because even the most uninstructed are able to grasp the common human meaning behind the meal. This ought to be one of the deepest and yet most communicative points of contact. It is something which makes sense to those we are trying to reach and is, as well, able to satisfy the needs of mature Christians.

A meal is a social occasion in the best sense. The taking of food together may well be the most intimate social occasion we know. A family meal, in which these factors come to bear most especially, borders on being a sacrament of family life—an outward and visible sign (the meal) of an inward and spiritual grace (the harmonious love of the members). In the meal all who share food together express as perfectly as any human situation can what we mean by Christian charity. Something *happens* to individuals when they have shared a meal. They have been bound together by this experience. A meal not only expresses the unity which should exist between individuals; it intensifies that unity. After we have dined with certain people, we bear a special relationship to these people which remains forever.

Did not our Lord choose the simplest and yet the deepest expression of human life through which to give Himself to us—the meal of loving friends? For the meal shows not only the perfection of relationship between man and man which God intends for the world. It shows our needs as well—our need for love and our need for food. We join together in the meal because we *must*. When we think of it, the meal reveals to us the profound depth of our human need. Even its repetition is symbolic of our human life for we need to be continually fed and loved in order to have life in us. How

like our Lord to take one of the most common things of life and turn it into the most holy.

### *The Paschal Mystery*

There is a logical progression from the general concept of liturgical action, the level of offertory, and the liturgy as a meal to a climax in the paschal mystery. Holy Week and Easter, properly understood, constitute a key which tells us more about the liturgical life of the Church than anything else. This is particularly important to the local church which is considering its liturgical life, for though the congregation must discover action and offertory first, perhaps its deepest need is to develop a sense of the mystery being enacted by 'Christ our passover' in its midst. So much of the worship one finds today lacks just this sense of the mystery. It is incurably earthbound in the worst sense. Until we can attain an awareness of the mystery in Christian worship, we shall not succeed in the task of the parish Liturgical Movement. What is this mystery?

The great sense which overhung the Last Supper was, of course, the Passover, the greatest religious feast of the Jews. Jesus chose the heart of Israel—Jerusalem at Passover time—as the moment in which to institute the Eucharist and die for the sins of the whole world. The Passover was the yearly remembrance of God's many gracious acts in creating his people Israel. At this time the Jews celebrated with thanksgiving the fact that they had been taken from slavery and bondage in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land by God's deliverance at the Red Sea. The Passover was then the celebration of God's redemption by what He had done. But at the time of our Lord, the Passover not only looked back to the deliverance of the Red Sea, it looked forward as well to a *final* deliverance at the end of time. It was a hope for the future charged with eschatological expectation. At Passover time there were always thoughts of the Messiah appearing in the midst of Israel.

It is against this background that we must see the Last Supper. We find in this meal the focus of the whole Messianic expectation fulfilled in Jesus—the dead raised, the lame healed, the blind receiving their sight, the power of Satan over the world repulsed. And here the Messiah who has spearheaded the Kingdom of God into history sits down with his disciples at the Messianic banquet. ‘Verily I say unto you I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until that day I drink it new in the Kingdom of God.’<sup>9</sup>

The Last Supper cannot be seen as any ordinary meal or even as a Jewish religious meal; it is an eschatological Passover meal. Whether the meal itself was an actual Passover meal is immaterial. It was the Passover which gave to it its principal meaning. Classical Protestant worship, which is so aware of the Holy Communion as an historical commemoration of the Last Supper, must take this background very seriously.

In what sense can we call the Passover-Last Supper the paschal mystery? Principally as it is related to the person of Jesus. It is Christ’s birth, death, resurrection, and ascension which make the Last Supper into the paschal mystery. Or to put it the other way around, it is the Passover which provides the ‘type’ or interpretation of the death and resurrection of our Lord. As we have said, the great theme of Passover is deliverance. Jesus must have seen his role as Messiah in terms of this great theme of Israel’s deliverance by God. But the Messiah’s deliverance was not that of the Old Covenant in which God saved His people from their enemies, the Egyptians. It was a deliverance from more powerful enemies, Satan and his kingdom, by a New Covenant instituted by the death and resurrection of Jesus. The second Passover is a mystery in that it is a passage from death to life which takes us on to a supra-historical plane. This took place first in Christ, but most important of all—and this is the essential point—we are able to participate in this *transitus*. The message of Easter morning

<sup>9</sup> Mark 14.25.



is, then, not that Christ is risen from the dead; it is the words of the epistle for Easter morning, 'If ye then be risen *with* Christ, seek those things which are above.'<sup>10</sup>

Christianity is not a philosophy, nor a morality, nor a doctrine; it is a fact—the fact of the Christian mystery in us now. 'For ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord,'<sup>11</sup> wrote St. Paul. Christ lives presently in His Church, which is us. And He lives to constantly renew the mystery in us.

Ernest Koenker sums up well the implications of the paschal mystery to the early Church. 'The ancient understanding of the Christian mystery was of an altogether concrete, visible, tangible and audible reality, the actuality of which consisted not only in concrete circumstances, but in an *action* which transpired before the eyes of the spectators, in which they themselves took part actively.'<sup>12</sup> There are at least two emphases in this idea of the Christian mystery which may help us understand the meaning of the liturgy. First, the concrete reality which transpires before our eyes. Second, the emphasis expressed by Dom Odo Casel who, we noted before, brought this conception to the attention of the Church. 'The *Mysterium* is the holy, cultic action in which the redemptive act is rendered present in the rite; since the cultic community accomplishes this rite, it participates in the saving act and through it attains redemption.'<sup>13</sup> This second aspect is that we, the 'cultic community', *accomplish* the rite. Is it helpful to think of the liturgy as something which is so concrete that it is visible, tangible, and audible. Is it helpful to think of the liturgy as something which *we* accomplish?

Surely the danger in both views is that the liturgy will become something which is much more man-centred than God-centred or faith-centred. This is precisely the criticism we have made of the worship of the Church today. There is

<sup>10</sup> Colossians 3.1.

<sup>11</sup> Ephesians 5.8.

<sup>12</sup> *The Liturgical Renaissance in the Roman Catholic Church*, E. Koenker, p. 108.

<sup>13</sup> *op. cit.* p. 106.



also the allied danger of making too close an identification between what we do and what God does. This is always a temptation for a church which believes strongly in the sacraments. It is a temptation of Satan.

The answer to these two questions seems to lie in what the early Church thought about baptism. Baptism is of particular importance to the paschal mystery because it is the initiation into the mystery. In the early Church it was normally performed as part of the paschal vigil on the night commemorating the Christian Passover; its ties with the mystery are very close indeed. Baptism in the Fathers is spoken of as the 'second Red Sea', the new and greater deliverance. Baptism was seen as the great dividing line between life and death. St. Augustine could shout exultantly, 'Let us congratulate ourselves. Let us break forth into thanksgiving. We are become not only Christians, but Christ. Do we understand, my brethren, the outpouring of God's grace upon us? Let us wonder and shout with gladness. We are become Christ; He is the Head, we are the members.'<sup>14</sup>

We can make no attempt to cover the immensely rich subject of baptism in the Fathers. Our only point here is that in the mind of these men our manhood was marvellously transfigured by the activity of Christ in the 'deliverance' of the waters of baptism. The result was that writers like St. Augustine and Cyril of Jerusalem could actually say that we are 'Christs'. In the light of this view of baptism, the concreteness of the mystery in the liturgy and our role in accomplishing the mystery do not seem quite so out of line. It is not that worship in the paschal mystery has become man-centred; it is that we through the paschal mystery have become God-centred. The veil of the temple has been rent through the action of Christ, and we have access to the Holy of Holies. In fact we have *become* the temple, which is the Body of Christ. St. Augustine in many places underscores this when he makes those very close connections between ourselves and the Body and Blood

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in *Liturgical Week*, 1948, p. 142.

of Christ. 'We receive what we are; and we are what we receive.'<sup>15</sup>

Is not part of the Gospel which we need to hear more today exactly what the paschal mystery emphasizes? Are we truly aware that our manhood has been raised up by Christ. and that we have passed from death to life? We must re-emphasize the mystery of the incarnation—the mystery of God in the things of this world. This is what we believe is meant by the need of the Church today for a more deeply sacramental religion. On the whole it is just this mystery of Christ in *us* which must receive treatment in parish worship. This is not the same thing as overlooking the action of Christ. It is only inasmuch as we do believe in the primacy of the action of Christ that we are able to believe in the paschal mystery. Alone we know we can do nothing. Yet because of what has happened to us, we can approach boldly to the throne of the heavenly grace when the deacon in the liturgy raises high the Bread which is Christ and says, 'The things of God for the people of God!'<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *The Worship of the Church*, Massey Shepherd, p. 163.

<sup>16</sup> Translation of the ancient words of the deacon, as used in the liturgy at Clare College, Cambridge.

## **8 Resources for Parish Liturgical Life: A Pattern**

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LITURGICAL LIFE IS something which arises out of the life of a particular people. No matter how inadequate it may be, every congregation has its own liturgical way of life; and this way of life says a great deal about us. No two congregations have exactly the same way of expressing their worship to God. Therefore, it would be quite impossible for us to try to suggest some ideal pattern of worship for the Church, even though it were based on the best experience of the Liturgical Movement. Each congregation has to examine its present pattern critically and evolve its *own* revised pattern based on its needs.

We now want to discuss the most far-reaching experiments which have come out of the Liturgical Movement. The pattern which we present is an eclectic one, and is not meant for any one particular church. Obviously what will make contact with factory workers in an industrial suburb of Paris will not be what is needed for a congregation in rural England. It would be a mistake to think that there is any church anywhere which is ready for all of this pattern. We must remember, too, that many of the most radical experiments have come out of the Church of France and reflect the Gallic love for the dramatic. The Church in England, whether Anglican, Methodist, or Roman Catholic, is by nature much more reticent towards outward show, and we must realize that this is not easily overcome. In suggesting a pattern at all, our intention is simply to give some idea of the scope which is now available to us in reconsidering liturgical life. We feel that the local church has an obligation to consider these experiments of the

Liturgical Movement and ask itself if the needs which lie behind these experiments are being met in the local church.

Let us quickly review some of the elements this pattern ought to have as it is seen against its necessary background—the mission of the Church. First, it must be communicative of the Gospel. We have criticized the present state of worship in the Church mainly on the grounds that it often misleads us about the nature of the Christian faith. It is not expressing what it is to be a member of the Body. We have failed to say imaginatively that Christian worship is an action, an offering, a fellowship, and that it encompasses all society. Second, the pattern must be geared to the missionary task of the congregation. Because the *raison d'être* of the local church is to *be* the Christian fellowship, worship must help keen militant Christians to exercise their apostleship. Third, it should be geared to the neighbourhood or social milieu because this is the field of the mission. We should be helping the Church to feel at home liturgically as well as apostolically in the midst of society. Fourth, it should keep in mind the three levels of 'parish' which we discussed in the first part of this book. The pattern must not only be providing for 'militants', but also for the general liturgical community which meet on Sunday, as well as the 'ninety and nine' outside the fold who are not yet ready for the Sunday liturgy. There is a fifth element which must be taken into consideration by all Anglicans which is, of course, the Prayer Book. Both the spirit and structure of the Prayer Book must be carefully weighed. Particular notice should be taken of Cranmer's intentions for the Church, rather than what subsequent generations have done with this intention. In a sense what we are trying to do is to restate many of the intentions of the Prayer Book in terms of the missionary situation today.

### *Going out and coming in*

To state in briefest outline this liturgical pattern: it has essentially two sides—the Church in assembly and the Church



in dispersion. This 'going out' and this 'coming in' are the basic rhythm of liturgical life. It is something which is repeated every time the liturgy is celebrated. We come together to receive our Lord, and we go out to take Him to the world. We believe that the Liturgical Movement has shown us that this rhythm ought to be greatly expanded into a pattern of liturgical life which takes place partly in the great liturgical assemblies when the whole Church is drawn together, and partly in small groups in dispersion. So we can say that there are two 'scenes' in which the liturgical life of the Church is laid—the house of God and the homes of the people of God.

In terms of the first half of the pattern—the coming in—there are two particular occasions on which the congregation must be gathered together in one place with one accord—baptism and the Eucharist. This is obviously the intention of the Prayer Book, and it was the practice of the early Church. Sacraments are intended for the Church *together*. They are by their nature corporate occasions because they are activities of Christ and we are the Body of Christ.

There are, however, other occasions when the Church ought to be gathered together. In a sense they are not as essential and they vary from church to church, but particularly in urban areas there should be liturgical gatherings in the church for the uninstructed. The congregation has a liturgical mission to the neighbourhood as part of the total mission. These gatherings with people who are on the outside fringes of Christian life should be neighbourhood occasions in the best sense. We should try to make every connection possible between the neighbourhood and the local church. Roman Catholics call these gatherings 'paraliturgies'; but we need not be bound by their terminology, which does, however, make the good Protestant point that not *everything* done in Church need be 'liturgical'!

The second half of the pattern—the going out—is somewhat more difficult to pinpoint because it is still in its early stages of development. We should make it clear that also we are using it in two senses. First, it means the Church going out

into the world from the liturgy, taking with us the gift of Christ's love. That is the missionary sense, and it underlies all that we have said. But secondly, as we are using it here, it means the Church going out from the parish and gathering to create the 'little church' of the neighbourhood.

The Church at Halton, which has had the most experience in England with this neighbourhood conception of the church in the House Church, divides it into two—the intensive and the extensive. This is to distinguish between gatherings of concerned Christians for Holy Communion, Bible study, discussion, or Evensong, and gatherings of this group with the outer circle of the parish who are *not* members of the congregation. In many ways this is a satisfactory distinction. On the other hand we feel there ought to be some distinction between the family church and the house church. The development of a genuine family liturgical life might be the key to many of the problems which the parish faces. It is something for which many parents are eager, yet they find it difficult to attempt. The local church must give them the resources they need to begin it.

In any event we feel there is a need for three things in this second half of the pattern—for the family church, for liturgical services in homes designed for the inner core of the Church, and for non-liturgical services in homes designed for those outside the congregation.

### *The Paschal Vigil*

One of the principal things the Liturgical Movement has restored to the Church has been a 'sense of Easter'. We have begun to realize anew the Easter experience of the living Lord present in the midst of His Church, which is to say Christ present in *us*.

In so many ways Easter is definitely the point at which to begin a parish Liturgical Movement. It is the place to teach the people what it means to be the gathered Church, the liturgical assembly. It is the key to baptism. It is the key to the Holy

Communion. It opens up the meaning of the New Testament as nothing else can. Logically we must begin here, but practically it may be an impossibility. The modern mind is so removed from the world of the Old and New Testaments that it may be some time before the congregation is ready for a full treatment of Easter in the local church. We believe that the essential Easter experience is the Passover experience. In order to have its full impact, Easter must be seen as the Christian Passover; it must be treated as the dramatic story of our origin as a people—our passage from death to life, our deliverance by God. On the whole, however, is this not far beyond the power of the average congregation to grasp? Would they see this as a key to the sacraments and their lives as Christians? We suspect that the symbolism of the meal will be much easier to get across, and this may be the place to begin. But one day the congregation must see the importance of having a much more complete Easter celebration than that to which we are accustomed.

This 'full treatment' is the Paschal Vigil, which has seen a revival in both Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches within the last few years.<sup>1</sup> Though the vigil represents a radical departure for most Protestant Churches today, we must not let its apparently exotic character blind us to its importance. In no sense is this a simple-minded imitation of Roman Catholic practice. Though the roots of the vigil lie buried deep in the life of the early Church, we do not advocate it on historical grounds. It is quite simply for practical, pastoral reasons that it ought to be attempted. The Easter Vigil liturgically is highly communicative of the Gospel.

We may have to begin by opening up the subject of the vigil in the Church. Traditionally, vigils were not pious preparations for the Church's feasts, but rather part of the faith itself. They gave expression to the fact that the Church is a Body which is gathered together waiting expectantly for the Lord. Our faith is one which is oriented towards the future

<sup>1</sup> Cf John T. Martin: *Christ our Passover: The Liturgical Observance of Holy Week* (SCM Press, 1958).



action of God. Faith and charity are incomplete without hope. We are a hopeful people, and therefore we watch and wait for the coming of the Lord. In the vigil this is precisely what happens.

We will have to teach, too, the four principal symbols which are part of the vigil. The first and second symbols are darkness and fire—the blackness of the night in which the liturgy begins and the fire of the paschal candle which will be carried into the church. This symbolism looks back to the blackness of the night when the first Passover took place and the pillar of fire which went before the children of Israel. The symbolism is fulfilled in Christ, who in the ‘second Passover’ brought us out of darkness into light.

The third symbol is water—the water of the Red Sea and the water of the ‘second Red Sea’, baptism. The water of the Red Sea meant to the old Israel deliverance from their enemies and to the new Israel it means deliverance too. For now we are in Christ and participate in His death and resurrection.

The fourth symbol is the bread and wine, which looks back to the bread and wine which Moses commanded the children of Israel to eat hurriedly, standing at their tables—the Passover meal. This is fulfilled in the ‘Christian Passover’—the Last Supper. We should note, too, that the Passover is a family meal. We should not overlook the fact that the paschal vigil is then a *family* occasion primarily. Easter should be the clue to the concept of family worship.

If we attempt the experiment of a paschal vigil in the church, we can profit particularly from the experience of the Church in France, who have been experimenting with this vigil service for a number of years now. The service has been especially effective pastorally in conveying this family sense of which we have spoken. The vigil has tended to bring the congregation together. It is a very long service, lasting nearly twice the length we are used to on Sunday. But if the congregation has been prepared beforehand for the length, there is no reason not to try it, particularly if the variety and action of the service are given full expression. One of the most help-



ful things is to preface the vigil with a ten-minute introduction just before the service begins. Here the three divisions of the vigil are explained—the proclamation of the word of God centring around the light of the paschal fire; the renewal of baptismal vows by the congregation followed by an actual baptism; and the celebration of the ‘Christian Passover’ meal itself—the Eucharist. This brief introduction is like a prologue to the drama. The reader leaves the pulpit. The church is plunged into the darkness of the paschal night. And we, being lifted up to the plane of religious myth, begin to enact once more the drama of our redemption.

On the pavement outside the church the paschal fire is started and the great paschal candle lit. The deacon carries it into the darkened church in procession, stopping three times in the midst of the people to cry, ‘The light of Christ’, to which the people reply, ‘Thanks be to God’. Now begins the lighting of the peoples’ candles with the fire of the paschal candle until the church is ablaze with this ‘light of Christ’.

The climax of this first part is reached in a great hymn telling the story of our redemption. This could possibly be sung as a sort of dialogue between the deacon and the people in order that the people may see this story as their own ‘family history’. It is just at this point that the enormous relevance of the Old Testament sweeps in on us. It is indeed the history of our origins as the people of God.

Then comes the reading of the Old Testament scriptures in which the story of God’s mighty acts is told from the Bible, beginning with the creation in Genesis, moving to the crossing of the Red Sea, and finally to the prophets, who foretold the New Covenant to be inaugurated by the Messiah. During the reading of these lessons the people remain standing to show that like the ancient people of God, they are people on the move, sojourners towards the Promised Land.

At this point a great procession of the entire congregation is formed. The people move out of the church if possible, singing perhaps some of the Passover psalms as they go. The purpose of this procession is to meet those who are to be

baptized. To be met by the entire congregation is certainly to be 'received into the congregation of Christ's flock'! The baptisms follow, and the people participate themselves by renewing their baptismal promises. This helps the congregation to see both that baptism is not something over and done with once administered and that the meaning of this sacrament is the Church's mystery to die and rise with Christ.

The third and final part of the vigil shifts the action to 'the dining table of the family of God'. We gather to eat the Christian Passover, 'Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast.'<sup>2</sup> As the ancient Israelites ate their Passover standing, why should not the congregation receive communion standing around a nave altar in order to stress the connection? This is, of course, the great climax of the paschal vigil. We have fully received the redemption which we celebrate.

### *Baptism*

One of the first things the Church in Halton did when they began their parish mission was to move the font into the centre of the church. This became a symbol for the place baptism must necessarily hold in the liturgical life of the Church. Actually the service begins to take on new meanings under these conditions. It brings out the whole sense of incorporation into the Body of Christ which is so essential.

There are two main connections which must be established between this liturgy and the paschal vigil. The first is that the primary meaning of baptism is not remission of sins, but rather death and resurrection with Christ. Of course we cannot blame congregations today for not knowing this. 'Sprinkling' hardly suggests remission of sins, much less death and resurrection! Baptism ought to be expressing the fact that Christ acts by a 'drowning'. We need huge fonts (such as some Baptist Churches have) with steps by which we can *descend* (death) and *ascend* (resurrection).

<sup>2</sup> I Corinthians 3.7-8.

Because this idea of death and resurrection in baptism is not immediately apparent, perhaps at the start there could be 'instructed baptisms' in which a reader in the pulpit comments on the action from time to time during the service. This would be useful for introducing the idea of liturgical action in the baptism service. The reception of the new member in the 'death and resurrection' community could be pointed out. Yet much more fundamental ways must be sought to convey the meaning of baptism—ways which are sacramental in that they convey the inward and spiritual by the outward and visible. What *we* do in the liturgy must be expressive of what *God* does.

The second connection which must be established between this sacrament and the paschal vigil is the concept of the family of God. Baptism is one of those occasions at which the entire congregation, or as many as possible, ought to be present. It is an obligation because it is a family occasion just like Christmas dinner or a wedding anniversary. The clergy, on the other hand, must see to it that the liturgy has the zest and expressiveness of great occasions in human families.

There are a number of things which might be done to make public baptism a real occasion in the local church. In the *Didache*, which records some of the practices of the early Church, we read, 'And before the baptism let the baptizer and him who is to be baptized fast and *all others* who are able.'<sup>3</sup> We must begin to encourage the whole congregation to prepare *with* those to be baptized at least by praying for them. Perhaps for several weeks before the baptism one of the godparents could read out the names of those to be baptized as part of the offertory in the parish communion. Then the people would keep a period of silence in order to pray for them.

Certainly we ought to be doing much more towards making the font a genuine focus in the church building. There is one church in Paris which has set up a series of panels in the

<sup>3</sup> *Didache* VI, 1.4.



corner of the church next to the font, explaining pictorially the meaning of baptism. On top of the font is a book in which are inscribed the names of the newly baptized. A notice near the book asks you not to leave the church without praying for these people.

Another church in the city of St. Louis in the United States has placed near the font for all to see the following quotation from St. Louis of France: 'I think more of the place where I was baptized than of the Cathedral of Rheims where I was crowned; for the dignity of a child of God which was bestowed on me at baptism is greater than that of a ruler of a kingdom. The latter I shall lose at death, the other shall be my passport to everlasting glory.' Such things as this simple notice or the placing of flowers around the font at Easter are important in helping the congregation to recover an understanding of baptism as a *parish* affair.

Let us try to sketch quickly the actual baptism itself seen as a corporate event. The Church at Halton has found it helpful to have a baptismal rehearsal the day before the public baptism. In fact this becomes a sort of vigil service for the baptism the next day. It gives the vicar an opportunity to speak directly to parents and godparents about their responsibilities in a way which is impossible at the baptism itself. This is a private and quiet occasion compared to the baptism.

If there is ever an excuse for overdoing the ceremonial side of the church and 'pulling out all the stops', it is in baptism. This is the evangelical sacrament, and there will never be a greater moment in the lives of any of us than when the saving waters of baptism are poured over us. Let there be processions, choirs, lights, vestments—all the ceremony the congregation will stand for! Let there be a full length sermon, too. The babies and mothers can be brought in later.

The godparents ought to take a conspicuous part in the service. At the time for the promises they will rise in a group and take these promises in the sight of the whole congregation. But the congregation as well should feel that they are much more than mere spectators. Their role is to be present to



receive the child; and in many parishes now they are saying together the prayer which begins, 'We receive this child into the congregation of Christ's flock . . .'

### *The Parish Communion*

'The Parish Communion is the twentieth century attempt to reproduce *under modern conditions* with an eye to modern needs, the essential features of the Eucharist as it was known to the first Christians, receiving it as they did direct from Christ and His apostles; and in keeping also with our own Prayer Book.'<sup>4</sup> The most characteristic way in which the Liturgical Movement has been crystallized in the Church is in this weekly community eucharistic service. It has gone under different names, but behind the names there has always been the desire to regain the centrality of the Eucharist in the early Church. This service must be seen as the pivot on which the entire parish Liturgical Movement turns. Actually it is a realizing of many of the aspects of liturgy we have singled out before—action, offertory, the meal, etc.

One of the first things the Parish Communion ought to clear up is the distinction between the *two* services which have been combined in the liturgy. The blurring of these two has resulted in a lessening of both. These two are the *synaxis* (a Greek word meaning 'the meeting') and the Eucharist proper. In our modern liturgy these two correspond to the opening collects, epistle, gospel, and sermon on one hand, and the remainder of the service centring around the breaking of the bread on the other.

On the whole, today we hardly do justice to the first half, which fulfils much the same function as the old-fashioned prayer meeting. It ought to be a time of praise, prayer and the reading and exposition of scriptures as in the ancient Jewish Synagogue service. This should be the place in the life of the Church where we can express most powerfully

<sup>4</sup> *What is the Parish Communion?* Kenneth Packard (reprint from *The Country Churchman*).

that we are a peculiar people, called out of the world, and filled with the Spirit.

One way to emphasize this distinction would be to perform the two halves in different parts of the church. The first part ought to centre around the Bible and pulpit and the second around the bread and the altar table. The first half could be taken from the same place where Morning and Evening Prayer are read. The stress on the *synaxis* as the word of God could be even heightened by reading the epistle and gospel from the Bible rather than from an altar prayer-book. In any case, the Bible should be much more in evidence, and there ought to be an open Bible in the church always, as a sort of 'sacrament of God with us'. There is a church in France which on week days keeps an open Bible near the entrance to the church. It is kept turned to either the gospel or epistle for the week and next to it is a notice which says, 'This is the word of God. Stop and read a few verses of the words of Life'. At the time for the Parish Communion to begin, the Bible could be carried in in procession and placed where the first part of the service will take place. At the time for the gospel, we would like to see a gospel procession into the midst of the people, and have all the people turn to face the gospel. This would be a way of showing that the gospel is directed to the people and belongs to them. In this respect we have been impressed with the effect of having a layman step out of the congregation to read the epistle to the people. The Bible is above all the *Church's* book, and this fact ought to be expressed by having the laity read the scriptures.

A word should be said in passing about the liturgical sermon. Historically the liturgical sermon is based on the homilies of the Fathers, which were no more than brief explanations of scripture to the people. The concern of this type of sermon is not to give an explanation of some phase of the service, but rather to show how the grace of our Lord Jesus enters in life through our participation in the Eucharist. It tries to link the gospel or epistle for the day, our lives as Christians, and the Eucharist. The liturgical sermon is a sort of bridge

between the life of the individuals present and the liturgy in order to strengthen faith and help us to receive our Lord more worthily. This type of brief sermon which lasts only a few minutes has its place in the Parish Communion. Unfortunately, however, the Parish Communion tends to eliminate a strong emphasis on evangelistic preaching. We need preaching today as the proclamation of the Gospel, as never before, and we must find room for it. But there may be places other than the parish communion where it will fit.<sup>5</sup>

At the present time the best title for the second half of the service might well be that used in the *Book of Acts*—‘the breaking of bread.’<sup>6</sup> This title brings out perfectly the stress necessary today on the meal. If we understand the Eucharist as a meal, then we will want to make certain outward changes to communicate this meaning. We may want to use a loaf of leavened bread as well as a table-altar made of wood and covered with a linen tablecloth. The congregation ought to see that preparations are being made for a meal. One church in London does not begin to prepare the altar until after the synaxis is over in order to make this division clear. Two servers prepare the altar, while the ministers put on their liturgical vestments.

The offertory procession of which we have already spoken is an integral part of the Parish Communion. We must watch, however, that it does not become routine and lose its symbolism. As the prayers and intentions of the church change, these ought to be connected with the offertory procession. In some churches now, one finds a large ledger at the back of the church in which the congregation is invited to enter their intercessions. These intercessions are then collected and read aloud by a layman as part of the offertory during the Parish Communion. Perhaps in addition to these private intercessions, a team of laymen could be responsible for summing up each week some specifically *parish* intercessions. The laymen carrying the bread and wine might pause before the altar with their

<sup>5</sup> See R. H. Fuller: *What is Liturgical Preaching?* (SCM Press, 1957).

<sup>6</sup> Acts 2.42.



gifts while these intercessions are being read. This would help to establish the connection between the oblations and the intercessions.

The Prayer for the Whole State of Christ's Church ought to be connected with the offertory as well. In some parishes, the people remain standing for it so that there is no break with the offering of alms and oblations. At Halton a layman reads the prayer standing in the midst of the people. The point is to make it part of the people's intercessions.

If the full symbolism of the meal is to come over, we must make clear the 'four part shape' of the Eucharist. This is the shape we read of in the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper when Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and distributed it. Too often the manner in which we celebrate the Eucharist today obscures this shape. When the Eucharist is performed at an altar facing the people, these actions are much more clearly seen. The bread and wine can be 'taken' in the presence of the congregation and placed on the altar in the sight of everyone. Though the 'blessing' is peculiarly the function of the priest in the Prayer of Consecration, we have suggested that the people must realize that this blessing begins with the corporate thanksgiving of the whole Body in the liturgy. We must teach the parish their part in this blessing in the *Sursum Corda*, the lifting up of their hearts to God. The breaking and distributing are easier to convey being manual actions the people can see. The symbolic point of this outward action can only be achieved when a loaf is used, and the connection is visibly expressed between the wholeness of the loaf as the undivided Body of Christ and the unity of the liturgical assembly, who have been made one Body—the same Body—through baptism. The breaking of this bread in silence while the congregation watches, waiting to be fed at this holy meal, can become one of the great climaxes of the liturgy.

The *manner* in which we share the bread and wine is a matter of importance. This is the great climax of the celebration, and we must give it the setting that it demands. We believe that the altar is the centre of the life of the church.



Therefore, at its most characteristic moment—the moment in which it receives what it is—the Church must surely be gathered round this altar outwardly as well as inwardly. It seems that the most significant way the Church could receive its spiritual food would be standing in a great semi-circle or circle around the altar. The Holy Communion was received standing until the thirteenth century in England, and this ancient practice expresses well the boldness as well as readiness for action of the people of God.

Before we end this sketch of the Parish Communion, we should mention briefly the role of singing in the liturgy. This is something which the Liturgical Movement has stressed, particularly in its rediscovery of the congregational singing of psalms.<sup>7</sup> We, as the people of God, are a people who sing. Singing by the entire congregation is an expression of both our unity and our love. We all know, however, some of the pitfalls of the tyranny of church music over the people. Walter Lowrie quotes provocatively that ‘the greatest impediment to the propagation of the Gospel is the choir, the choirmaster, and the organ.’<sup>8</sup> The Liturgical Movement has, however, shown us one way out of the difficulty. The answer is not to do away with the choir; the choir must simply be used in a different manner. It must be a resource for congregational singing and not a substitute. In some churches one now finds the choir sitting together in the front of the congregation (and of course not robed). The choirmaster, who is now in plain view, is able to lead both choir and people; and thus he becomes a true minister of music to the entire congregation. In France now, particularly in the singing of psalms, there is a sort of dialogue between the choir and a soloist, and the people. The choir and soloist sing the verses in a more complex manner to add enrichment, and the people are able to participate by singing the refrain. The psalms sung in this

<sup>7</sup> cf. *Psaume et Cithare*, L. P. Deiss, Editions du Levain, 1 rue de l'Abbé-Gregoire, Paris, for an example of what has been done. Also the recording *Psaumes-Psautier de la Bible de Jerusalem*, Editions Studio SM, 33-04, Paris.

<sup>8</sup> *Action in the Liturgy*, Walter Lowrie.

manner go a long way towards helping the laity participate in their role of the people of God.<sup>9</sup>

### *'Paraliturgies'*

At the beginning of the *Mission de France* in the early 1940's, a form of service was devised to meet the pressing missionary needs of the country. It was recognized that the majority who had no knowledge of Christianity were nowhere ready for the liturgy and that something was needed to fill the gap. The result was the 'paraliturgy' (alongside the liturgy). This is not so much a simplified 'people's service' in the usual sense, as a sort of half-way-house between drama and liturgy. There are hymns and responses for the people, and there may be preaching and reading from the Bible; but a primary emphasis is on visual communication and drama. It is intended to supplement the liturgy, not to be a substitute for it. Free Churchmen will have a great deal to tell us about the resources of non-liturgical worship, and here we have yet another point of contact between the Liturgical Movement and Protestantism. There seems to be a growing need to find a new scope for expressing our redemption in Christ. We must discover the role of drama and a more imaginative use of music.

A principal use for the 'free' service is in connecting the mission of the local church with the liturgical year. Christmas and Easter are two occasions on which the church can reach individuals who cannot be reached at any other time. Often the church loses valuable opportunities by providing a routine service at these times. Yet we ought to be most conscious of our missionary obligation at Christmas and Easter. The congregation ought to provide special *parish* services then—services in which one does not have to be an instructed Christian in order to participate.

<sup>9</sup> The advantages and disadvantages of our various ways of using the psalms in worship—the Scottish metrical version, Anglican chant, responsive reading, as well as the new French method, and anything that can be learned of the practice of churches in Asia and Africa—would be a useful study for an ecumenical group.

To give a concrete idea of what we mean, let us describe a free service which took place in an industrial suburb of Paris. We should emphasize the fact that the group the church wanted to reach was French workers. This service would have been quite unsuitable for a middle-class suburb in America or an English rural parish.

This service took place on Good Friday. On entering the church, we found that a platform had been set up in the nave and a curtain drawn across the chancel. The refrain to a Lenten hymn had been placed on the curtain in large letters which could be read throughout the whole church. This refrain proved to be the theme of the service.

About ten minutes before the service was due to begin, a minister came into the pulpit and explained briefly about the reason for a service on Good Friday. We then practised a few hymns to be used, including the refrain on the curtain. To emphasize the solemnity of Good Friday, the clergy entered in the semi-darkness to the slow beat of a drum. When the clergy had taken their places, the preacher, the vicar of the parish, came on to the platform and without the aid of notes or lectern began to preach an evangelistic sermon of great intensity. His theme was the ways in which the crucifixion of Christ continues to go on through man's inhumanity to man. Almost all his examples were drawn from the local newspapers or incidents in the parish. Then the church was darkened and there began a dramatic representation of the Passion and Crucifixion in a sort of semi-operatic *recitatif* style. The drama was in three scenes, and all the dialogue was taken from the Gospels. When this was over, the vicar returned to the platform, and taking a large crucifix from the altar, held it above his head, inviting those present to consider the means of Jesus' death, but our life. An impressive period of silence was kept, while we meditated on what we had seen. At the end he asked all who wished to come forward and adore the cross by kissing it, which is the ancient custom of the Latin Church.

For Christmas Eve when the church has its most effective moment to preach the Gospel to the whole parish, a service



used by the Abbé Michonneau might be tried. It is called 'The World Needs a Saviour'. The important point in working out the theme is to make the relevant connection between the Gospel and the true situation of the modern world as it is experienced by the people of the parish. In the first part, members of the parish dressed in their ordinary clothes enact scenes familiar to their own experience, showing how the world needs a saviour in our homes, in our work, and in our hearts. In the second part there are readings from the Bible telling of the world's need for a saviour, and finally how this saviour was sent by God. Then the people join in the singing of Christmas carols, rejoicing that He has come. In the third part there are dramatic representations of the people who welcome Him—both shepherds and factory workers. We can easily envision this sort of thing being done in many different types of parishes late on Christmas Eve, followed by a midnight celebration of Holy Communion for the congregation.

A theme for Advent which was devised also by Michonneau's parish is a 'Gospel Festival', in which a choir sings answers from the Bible to some of the burning questions of the day. The congregation would want to pick out three or four problems most of the parish is facing, such as control of the atom bomb, personal anxiety, or the increase in the crime rate. On one side of a platform in the nave, a member of the congregation could read out of the local newspapers specific news items which illustrate these problems. Each problem might be presented visually in some way. Then a choir on the other side of the platform would sing in unison one or more verses from the Gospels which give the nucleus of the Christian answer to these problems. The conclusion would be the common need of the world for the Gospel—a theme of Advent.

There is no need to list the possibilities for every season of the liturgical year. It is obvious how inherently dramatic such times as Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Pentecost are. We are not suggesting that the congregation should attempt these rather elaborate gatherings for every season of the



church year; but over a number of years, it might be a good idea to try each one once, just to see what can be done in terms of enrichment and communication.

### *The Family Church*

We have suggested that the Church today needs to be both more gathered and more dispersed. It must express more clearly that it is the people of God, gathered together out of the world—a peculiar people, a royal priesthood—as well as being completely at home in the world, though not of the world. These two foci are complements which need each other.

Within the realm of the Church in dispersion there are three ‘little churches’ which are needed. They all have a different role to play. There is the intensive and extensive House Church developed at Halton of which we have already spoken. The role of the House Church is both to help the parish see the holiness of *all* life in the light of the Incarnation—the sacredness of the common and ordinary—and to develop the small neighbourhood liturgical assembly—to help the parish to see its neighbourhood life united on the basis of the Holy Communion. Family life inevitably enters into the House Church simply because the House Church is concerned with all of neighbourhood life, yet in a sense family life is incidental to the House Church. It does not utilize the particular resources of family life directly, and indeed it cannot because the family is by nature an exclusive community.

The Church must begin to draw on the resources which family intimacy provides. If this matter is treated carefully and liturgical life not forced on the family, there is every reason to believe that the family can reach a startling depth of liturgical participation very quickly. Perhaps the best way to approach the matter is to set up a ‘test run’ experiment with five families of the congregation for a given period of time. The families ought to be already active in the life of the congregation, because in this experiment we will try to make every

connection possible between the church and the home. If there is a parish communion, the family must agree to be present weekly as a family. The Sunday School teacher should be invited to a family meal and time given to friendly, informal conversation with all members of the family participating. The minister also should make two or three visits on the families during this period and discuss how the experiment is progressing. And finally, there should be opportunities for all the parents involved to consult each other.

What sort of resources has the family in the home for family worship? First, there ought to be a short daily meeting of the family for Bible reading and/or prayers. Exactly how this period will be used will depend on the ages of the children, their willingness to co-operate in the experiment, and the family's degree of self-consciousness in attempting family worship at all. To break the ice the father could begin by reading a selected passage out of the Bible and relating it to some incident in the life of the family. The leadership for this daily worship and indeed largely for the whole enterprise must fall on the shoulders of the father as the head of the household. In this regard we can learn from Jewish families in which the father is the religious leader. The mother has her own role to play, but it is the father who is leader. This is particularly important because we want to make the connection between the father presiding at the family meal and the minister presiding at the Eucharist. The family meal should be the centre of gravity of family worship. The family must agree to sit down to one meal together every day and not rush off the minute it is over. This may be difficult, but could this not be part of the discipline of being a Christian family?

The goal of these daily meetings is to develop a sort of spontaneous quality in which the members of the family feel quite free to express their real concerns in discussion and prayer. The recitation of the General Confession has rich possibilities for family life. There could even arise enough trust in this community for individuals to ask forgiveness for specific things

known to the family. The meaning of confession and forgiveness comes out clearly in the context of the community in the family. The utilization of this resource should do as much as any other one thing to knit the family together in Christ.

The great event of family worship is of course the Parish Eucharist, even though it takes place outside the home. The corporateness of this event well suits the corporateness of the family. Families should go together, sit together, and receive their communion together. Perhaps at first glance this seems to be overdoing the corporate side, but families today have to fight to find time to spend together. In countries such as the United States there is a dangerous tendency towards rigid stratification into age groups. Some time on Saturday, therefore, there ought to be an extended family conference in which family problems can be aired and a joint intention for the Eucharist decided on. The gospel and epistle for the next day can be read aloud, and any thoughts of the family on the relevance of this scripture to the family situation brought out. In this weekly conference, the family should be thinking in terms of their mission to the neighbourhood as well. How have they used their influence during the week? Whom have they helped? Who still needs their help? What have they learned by being among their neighbours?

Another principal resource for family worship is something which can best be the responsibility of the mother as well as the children. This is the family observance of the liturgical year. There should be a whole series of customs in the family which are related to Christmas and Easter and also the other feasts of the year. Many churches have begun to encourage the family 'Advent Wreath' with its four candles symbolizing the four Sundays in Advent. Each Sunday in Advent the family gathers round the wreath to light an additional candle, read the prophecies of the Messiah, and pray together the Advent collects. Actually, Advent and Christmas being the celebration of Christ's coming and birth, belong particularly to children. The mother of the family ought to see to it that the



children participate fully in the expectation of Advent. She might help them to make an 'Advent Tree' before the family begins to think about the Christmas tree. This is a tree with the names of all the Messiah's ancestors attached to it (Christ the Tree of Jesse).

Lent and Easter should be times for special family religious observances. If the children are young enough, the family might have its own Palm Sunday procession when they return from church with their blessed palms. The father might read aloud the Palm Sunday story and then lead a procession throughout the house, while the children wave their palms and sing 'All Glory, Laud, and Honour'. The procession could end at the mantelpiece where the palms are placed in view as a reminder of the beginning of Holy Week.

On Maundy Thursday the family might want to have their own Passover meal with a roast lamb, the Passover bread, and a special goblet of wine. The family could sing a hymn, and the father could read aloud the account of the Passover in the Bible.

### *The House Church*

The completion of this liturgical way of life for the missionary parish is the House Church. The experience of the Church at Halton in celebrating Holy Communion in people's homes has shown us not only the new pastoral horizons which this conception of the church opens up, but also the theological necessity for a consideration of the church at this level. Something has been said at Halton about the nature of the church through these house celebrations that we cannot afford to overlook whether or not we agree with it. Here we cannot go into the question of the theological correctness of the House Church. We suspect that the fact that the Church has spent the vast majority of its history without the House Church poses an insoluble question. All that can be said is that this is not a stunt or an evangelistic technique. The house celebration is



seen as a part of the Gospel itself. There is some basis for it in Scripture<sup>10</sup>; but on the whole we must simply say as Philip said to Nathanael, 'Come and see'. A new dimension of liturgical life opens up in the House Church. Whether or not this is 'orthodox' seems a little beside the point when you are confronted with the new wealth of the Gospel's meaning which the House Church conveys. New theological meanings suddenly emerge in the sacraments when the external arrangements are changed. Something new happens to the Eucharist in the church when the minister celebrates facing the people. Something new happens to baptism when it is performed in the centre of the church in the presence of the entire congregation. And something new happens to the Eucharist when it is celebrated in people's homes.<sup>11</sup>

Inasmuch as the Church has awakened to its mission to the local society, the House Church seems inevitable. If we really believe in the laity being present in their world and 'forming Christ' among their neighbours through Christ's love, then how can we keep the Holy Communion out of it? This is simply the inevitable fulfilment of what we desire to do. The mission as it has been outlined here means the Church at the grass roots neighbourhood level. And the Church means the Holy Communion as well as fellowship between Christians. It is as simple as that. The existence of the House Church is the fruit of the existence of the mission in the local neighbour-

<sup>10</sup> Cf. the article by Dr. J. A. T. Robinson on the House Church in *Theology*, August 1950.

<sup>11</sup> It may be suggested that the 'House Church' is a new response to the new situation of the 'post-Christian' masses in the Western industrial world. In spite of what is often said, they are not 'pagans', and the assumption that Britain or France or the U.S.A. are 'mission fields' in the same sense as most parts of Asia and Africa is largely false, because of the pervasive influence of 'residual Christianity'. This 'residual Christianity' is shown not only in some moral judgments, in a general friendliness (tempered by indifference) to the churches, and (most interestingly) in the resentment aroused when baptism is 'refused' to the infants of non-church-goers. People who will not 'go to church' feel nonetheless that they belong to the Church. To a considerable extent this is a new situation, to which the House Church (the Church going to them) is a new answer.

hood. If we get events in the correct order, the House Church is the proof that the mission exists in the neighbourhood. It would be quite impossible to start this as an experiment. The whole effort would collapse because there would be no particular need for it. Though the clergy may see the value of the House Church in advance and suggest it at the proper time, in a much deeper sense it is something which is *demand*ed by the laity who are carrying on the mission. There is a *need* for it when the mission is seen in this light. The House Church may begin with discussion in homes and may lead to Bible study and prayers, but once people's Christian life is centred on the weekly Eucharist, sooner or later someone is going to ask for the Holy Communion in the same setting as Bible study and prayer, in the house. And why should they not have it?

What are the resources of the House Church for the liturgical life of the parish? We will concern ourselves with the intensive House Church as the extensive mostly revolves around discussion or perhaps Bible study. Actually we can see little need to develop the liturgical year in the House Church, though it is an important part of the family group. The celebrations of the liturgical year will take place in the Sunday assembly. Here the focus is much more on the human, manward side of the Body—the mission—than on the heavenly mysteries of Christ. Not that the two sides of the Body of Christ can ever be separated. Our whole theme has been how deeply they need each other in order to be themselves. Yet there are times when one is more emphasized than the other.

The point of liturgical life in the House Church is to glorify God in the common and familiar things of daily living and thereby to sanctify this life. To hear the words of the Holy Communion and to participate in the actions of offering and thanksgiving, which we associate so completely with the House of God, in an ordinary house is to undergo a spiritual growth. The holiness even in the ugliness of the world breaks powerfully over the celebration. This is the same ugliness as the

stable and manger. As Eric James has put it, 'At Halton the Body of Christ is exposed'.<sup>12</sup>

One of the most impressive parts of the house celebration is, of course, that it takes place on the same table on which the family eat their daily bread. Nowhere in liturgy do we get a more perfect connection between our daily bread and Christ our daily bread. It is here we realize powerfully the two kinds of the food and fellowship which we all need for life—natural food and fellowship and supernatural. Here we see that ultimately we cannot live without them both. There in the very place where the head of the earthly household presides at the family meal stands the minister, the representative of Christ who presides at this heavenly meal. After the Holy Communion has been celebrated on the family dining table, can any meal thereafter be less than a 'little eucharist'?

In these house celebrations, the congregation ought to be getting used to the daily sermon. If we are going to develop the potentialities of the liturgy, we must see that the sacrament and the word of God must always be placed together. Actually the closeness of community in the house celebration nearly demands it. Something *must* be said in the name of this small community to tell them that they have come to offer Christ and that they go to take Him into the world. When friends meet together, they do not remain silent; they must tell each other something significant about themselves. As Christians meeting together at our most characteristic moment—the breaking of the bread—we must express the really important thing, which is Christ.

It is through this meeting with God in the familiar surroundings of daily life that we are able to continue the meeting with our neighbours without a noticeable break. Here is a place where those who have accepted their lay ministry can learn what this priesthood means, not abstracted from the problem, but right in the heat of the battle. There is a sense in which by just participating in a house celebration, we have already begun the mission. When we joined with the rest in taking

<sup>12</sup> *Theology*, February 1957.

the piece of bread which was us and placing it on the paten, we performed the first action of the mission. We were responding to God in giving ourselves to the world with all those who were present. And there we learned the inner meaning of the mission.



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